🟥 PlayStation 3 🟧 PlayStation Portable 🟩 PlayStation Network 🟦 PlayStation 2

PlayStation®

The Official Magazine

JANUARY 10

HUGEST GAMES

2010's

SPECIAL ISSUE

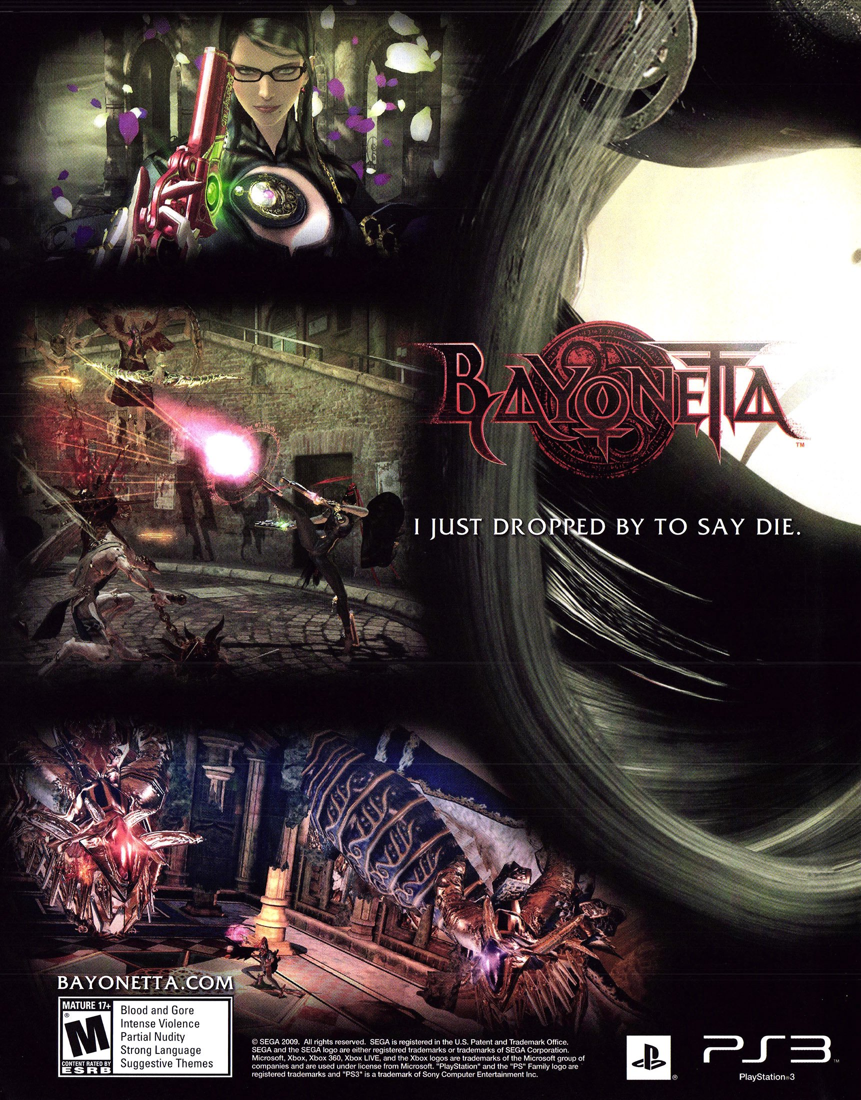
PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 28 (January 2010)

12 months. 40 pages. 110 games.
5000 new friends (and enemies)
All you need to know about every
single game that matters

+

EXCLUSIVE
SPLIT/SECOND
Race. Ignite. Explode!

$5.99US
01>
0 70989 38749 2


BAYONETTA™
I JUST DROPPED BY TO SAY DIE.
BAYONETTA.COM
MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Partial Nudity
Strong Language
Suggestive Themes
PS3
PlayStation®3

© SEGA 2009. All rights reserved. SEGA is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. SEGA and the SEGA logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of SEGA Corporation. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies and are used under license from Microsoft. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks and "PS3" is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

1UP.COM
BEST OF
E3
WINNER
2009
XBOX 360
XBOX
LIVE
SEGA

COMING JANUARY 2010

"Best Action Game of E3."
-1UP.com

Developed by PLATINUMGAMES INC.

Contents

January 2010 **PlayStation** The Official Magazine

🟥 PlayStation 3 🟧 PlayStation Portable 🟩 PlayStation Network ☐ PlayStation 2

Features

24 **PS3 IN 2010**
The year's HUGEST games—in our BIGGEST preview feature ever.

26 Shooters

34 Action

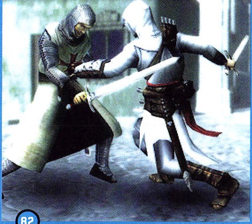
44 Adventure

52 RPG

58 Driving & Sports

66 **CALL OF DUTY: RETROSPECTIVE AND REVIEW**
Relive the franchise's glorious past and find out if *Modern Warfare 2* goes beyond the call of duty.

24
MAG
66
God of War III
te Knight Chronicles
skate3
Heavy Rain
Split/Second
SPLIT SECOND
6



Update

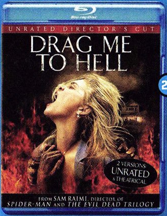
6 The 10: The stories everyone's talking about

6 Predictions for 2010

12 PTOM Interview: Vince Zampella

17 Op-Ed: 3D gaming

22 Blu-ray reviews


UNRATED DIRECTOR'S CUT
DRAG ME TO HELL
2 VERSIONS UNRATED & THEATRICAL
FROM SAM RAIMI, DIRECTOR OF SPIDER-MAN AND THE EVIL DEAD TRILOGY
22

Reviews

87 Adventures to Go!

86 Armored Core 3 Portable

82 Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines

78 Avatar

80 Band Hero

83 Buzz! Quiz World

76 Dragon Age: Origins

86 Ghostbusters

83 God of War Collection

80 Guitar Hero: Van Halen

81 Karaoke Revolution

87 Kenka Bancho: Badass Rumble

85 LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues

81 LEGO Rock Band

79 LittleBigPlanet

87 Marvel Super Hero Squad

86 MX vs. ATV Reflex

84 NCAA Basketball 2010

83 Planet 51

85 Way of the Samurai 3

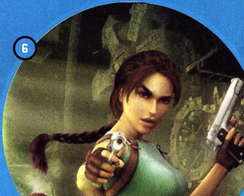
85 Where the Wild Things Are

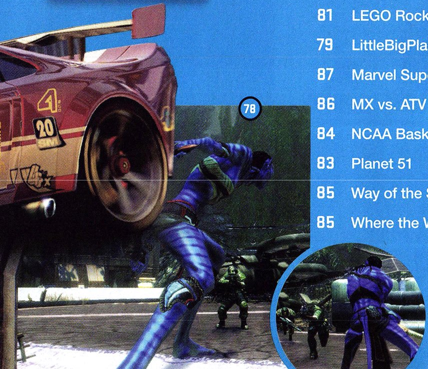
Network

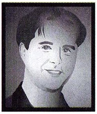
88 Playing Hard to Get
PS3's toughest Trophies...and how to earn them

90 PlayStation Network Corner
Previews, Reviews, Downloads, Video Delivery Service

94 Letters







Editor's Note

"We are all interested in the future, for that is where you and I are going to spend the rest of our lives." – *Plan 9 from Outer Space*

You know, New Year's—not just the day, but the whole period from December 26th through February—is my second favorite holiday. Oh sure, it lacks the wild costumes of Halloween, the patriotic bombast of the Fourth of July, and the spiritual significance of Easter (my number one fave). And it definitely doesn't have the potential for loot and/or reverence that Christmas/Hannukah/Kwanzaa/Festivus/etc. have. But New Year's has its own special secret weapon—it overflows with a sparkling *optimism,* a freshly renewed hope, an invigorating potential that no other holiday can touch.

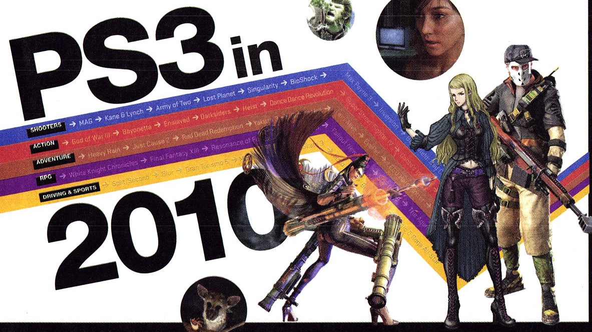
Was last year rough? Didn't go your way? Forget about it. This is a new year and everything will be better. Was last year good? Great, even? Then hold on—this year's going to hit the afterburners and rocket you to Saturn. In short, New Year's is all about celebrating the future and everything it can be. And this year—2010? The future is looking amazing.

Check out this very issue of PTOM, whose avalanche of impending awesomeness has re-sculpted the very tectonics of the magazine. Our normal preview and feature sections simply could not contain all that we needed to cram into them, so we've scooped them out and dropped in the mother of all 2010 preview features. At 40 pages, it may be the largest single feature PTOM has ever done. But it's what we needed to do to show you the 100-plus PS3 games charging up to rock your world over the next 12 months—and that's not even counting PSN games or downloadable add-ons. Now that's our kind of future.

Not only is the future phenomenal, it's here *now.* Mega-massive new Sony franchises *MAG, Heavy Rain,* and *White Knight Chronicles* will all be on shelves by February, and the feverishly anticipated *God of War III* and even the elusive *Gran Turismo 5* will follow closely behind. Add in sizzling third-party games like *Bayonetta, Split/Second, Dark Void, BioShock 2,* and *Darksiders* (among others), and the first three months of 2010 look ready to blow the last few holiday seasons away. Simply put, the future holds more great gaming than any normal human being can handle.

Finally, the future also holds the return of an old friend. As you may remember from my November 09 Editor's Note, I'm not PTOM's permanent Editor in Chief—I've just been keeping the seat warm and the engine purring for the next guy. And I'm thrilled to say that next guy is the one and only Gary Steinman, a former PTOM-ian who will return and become the permanent Editor in Chief starting next issue.

As for me, I'll be heading back to GamesRadar.com, where I hope you'll all visit. But I can't go without taking a moment to say how much fun I've had over the last four months and (except for a few late-night typos that will haunt me forever—it's the curse of an editor) how very proud I am of the work we've done. It's been a privilege to work with such a fine crew and serve such great readers like you folks. You rock. Thank you, and have a fantastic 2010.


PS3 in 2010
SHOOTERS → MAG → Kane & Lynch → Army of Two → Lost Planet → Singularity → BioShock →
ACTION → God of War III → Bayonetta → Enslaved → Darksiders → Heist → Dance Dance Revolution →
ADVENTURE → Heavy Rain → Just Cause 2 → Red Dead Redemption →
RPG → White Knight Chronicles → Final Fantasy XIII → Resonance of Fate
DRIVING & SPORTS → Split/Second → Blur → Gran Turismo 5 →
Max Payne 3

PlayStation
The Official Magazine

EDITORIAL
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Eric Bratcher
MANAGING EDITOR Roger Burchill
ASSISTANT EDITOR Scott Butterworth
INTERN Carlos Ruiz
EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS Dan Amrich, Jason D'Aprile, Amanda Glasser, Andrew Hayward, Alan Kim, Joe Newman, Douglass C. Perry, Mikel Reparaz, Rob Smith

ART
ART DIRECTOR Ken Bousquet
DESIGN CONTRIBUTORS Shelley Szudera, Gary Liew

BUSINESS
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER Kristen Salvatore
ksalvatore@futureus.com
SENIOR DIRECTOR NATIONAL ADVERTISING Rachelle Considine
650-238-2505, rconsidine@futureus.com
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INTEGRATED SALES Nate Hunt
415-269-5408, nhunt@futureus.com
REGIONAL SALES DIRECTOR Isaac Ugay
949-305-0767, iugay@futureus.com
REGIONAL SALES DIRECTOR Carol Gillard
646-723-5476, cgillard@futureus.com
REGIONAL SALES MANAGER Rachel Campos
650-745-9207, rcampos@futureus.com
ACCOUNT MANAGER Arthur St. Germain
650-238-2571, astgermain@futureus.com
DETROIT CONSUMER MANAGER Alan Dickinson
248-792-2408, alandmedia@comcast.net
ADVERTISING COORDINATOR Heidi Hapin
hhapin@futureus.com
SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER Andrea Recio-Ang
arecio-ang@futureus.com
MARKETING COORDINATOR Allyson Kardel
akardel@futureus.com

PRODUCTION
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Richie Lesovoy
SENIOR PRODUCTION COORDINATOR Larry Briseno
PRINT ORDER COORDINATOR Jennifer Lim

CONSUMER MARKETING
DIRECTOR CONSUMER MARKETING Rich McCarthy
CIRCULATION MANAGER Stephanie Blake
NEWSSTAND DIRECTOR Bill Shewey
CONSUMER MARKETING OPERATIONS DIRECTOR Lisa Radler
BUSINESS MANAGER Elliot Kiger
SR. ONLINE CONSUMER MARKETING MANAGER Jennifer Trinkner
CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER Mike Frassica

FUTURE US, Inc.
4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400
South San Francisco, CA 94080
www.futureus.com

PRESIDENT John Marcom
VICE PRESIDENT/CFO John Sutton
VICE PRESIDENT/INTERNET DEVELOPMENT Tyson Daugherty
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR/GAMES GROUP Stephen Pierce
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR/MUSIC Brad Tolinski
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR/TECHNOLOGY & LIFESTYLE Jon Phillips
GENERAL COUNSEL Charlotte Falla
HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR Nancy DuBois

Future US, Inc. is part of Future plc. Future produces carefully targeted special-interest magazines for people who share a passion. We aim to satisfy that passion by creating titles offering value for money, reliable information, smart buying advice and which are a pleasure to read. Today we publish more than 150 magazines in the U.S., U.K., France, and Italy. Over 100 international editions of our magazines are also published in 30 other countries across the world.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR).

FUTURE PLC
30 Monmouth St., Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW, England
Tel +44 1225 442244
www.futureplc.com

NON-EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN: Roger Parry
CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Stevie Spring
GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR: John Bowman

CUSTOMER SERVICE: PlayStation: The Official Magazine Customer Care, PO Box 5154, Harlan, IA 51593-0654. Phone: 1-800-477-0484. Web: www.playstationthemagazine.com/customerservice. Email: playstation@cdsfulfillment.com. Back issues can be purchased by calling 1-800-865-7240. REPRINTS: Reprint Management Service. Phone: 717-399-1900 x.100.

ISSN: 1941-5303

PlayStation: The Official Magazine is published 13 times a year, monthly plus Holiday issue following December issue. Future US, Inc., 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Phone: (650) 872-1642. Fax (650) 872-2207. Website: www.futureus.com. Periodicals postage paid in South San Francisco, CA and at additional mailing offices. Newsstand distribution is handled by Time Warner Retail. Subscriptions: One year basic rate (13 issues): $20.00 U.S., $34.00 Canada. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST #128220688). $44.00 Foreign. Prepaid in US funds only. Subscriptions do not include newsstand-only specials. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to PlayStation: The Official Magazine, P.O. Box 5154, Harlan, IA 51593-0654. PMA #40612608. Produced in the U.S.A. Ride-along Enclosure: None. Standard Mail enclosure: None. Returns: Bleuchip International, PO Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2, Canada. Future US publishes Guitar World, Mac | Life, Maximum PC, Nintendo Power, Pregnancy, Revolver, Windows: The Official Magazine, The Official Xbox Magazine, and others.

Entire contents copyright 2009 Future US. Printed In the USA. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Reproduction on the Internet of the articles and pictures in this magazine is illegal without the prior written consent of PlayStation: The Official Magazine. Products named in the pages of PlayStation: The Official Magazine are trademarks of their respective companies. Future US, Inc is not affiliated with the companies or products advertised or covered in PlayStation: The Official Magazine.

DISTRICT 9

"IT WILL BLOW YOUR MIND. IT'S A MUST-SEE MOVIE."

– *Entertainment Weekly*

"A simply stunning, edge-of-the-seat, adrenaline-charged sci-fi action thriller that will leave you breathless."

– Paul Fischer, DarkHorizons.com

"One of the best sci-fi films I've seen since *The Matrix*."

– Scott Chitwood, ComingSoon.net

Blu-ray Disc
PETER JACKSON PRESENTS A FILM BY NEILL BLOMKAMP
DISTRICT 9
NO HUMANS ALLOWED
"IT WILL BLOW YOUR MIND. IT'S A MUST-SEE MOVIE"
– Entertainment Weekly
DISTRICT 9

ON BLU-RAY™ AND 2-DISC DVD
DECEMBER 22ND

RENT OR BUY IT ON DVD OR BLU-RAY AT BLOCKBUSTER®

Blu-ray™ Exclusive Content

- **Joburg from Above – Interactive Map:** Go deeper into the world of *District 9*.
- GOD OF WAR III

  Playable PlayStation®3 Game Demo and Unlock an Exclusive Making-of the Game!
- And more!

R RESTRICTED
FOR BLOODY VIOLENCE AND PERVASIVE LANGUAGE
SPECIAL FEATURES AND BD LIVE CONTENT ARE NOT RATED AND MAY NOT BE SUBTITLED OR CLOSED CAPTIONED.

Canadian Home Video Rating 14A Gory Scenes, Extreme Violence

TRI STAR

Available at participating BLOCKBUSTER® stores. Availability date subject to change without notice. Membership rules apply for rentals. See participating BLOCKBUSTER® store location for complete terms and conditions. BLOCKBUSTER name, design and related marks are trademarks of Blockbuster Inc.
©2007 Blockbuster Inc. All rights reserved.
© 2009 District 9 Ltd. All Rights Reserved.
© 2009 Layout and Design Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Inc.
All Rights Reserved. Artwork and Special Features Subject to Change.

QED INTERNATIONAL

WINGNUT FILMS

www.SonyPictures.com

SONY PICTURES HOME ENTERTAINMENT

THE 10

The stories everyo talking about

2 PS3: Climbing the charts
page 8

3 The *real* cause of aquaphobia
page 9

4 Warlord: Vince Zampella
page 12

5 "We gotta take it one game at a time..."
page 14

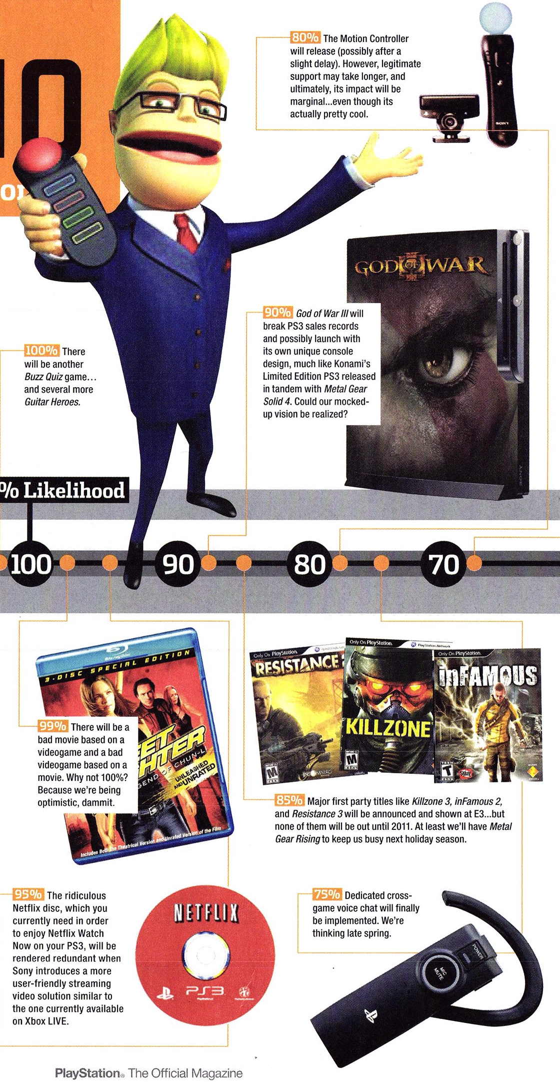
6 The truth about what you're *really* playing
page 16

7 Op-Ed: 3D Games—who needs 'em?
page 17

8 The (tech) answers you need
page 18

9 Dev vs. Fan: The *Shock*-ing showdown
page 20

10 Burning Question: Getting a game job
page 21



100% There will be another *Buzz Quiz* game… and several more *Guitar Heroes.*

99% There will be a bad movie based on a videogame and a bad videogame based on a movie. Why not 100%? Because we're being optimistic, dammit.

95% The ridiculous Netflix disc, which you currently need in order to enjoy Netflix Watch Now on your PS3, will be rendered redundant when Sony introduces a more user-friendly streaming video solution similar to the one currently available on Xbox LIVE.

90% *God of War III* will break PS3 sales records and possibly launch with its own unique console design, much like Konami's Limited Edition PS3 released in tandem with *Metal Gear Solid 4*. Could our mocked-up vision be realized?

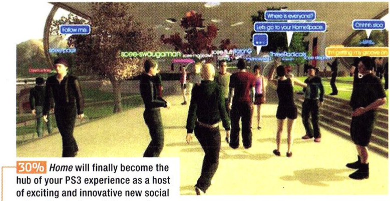
85% Major first party titles like *Killzone 3, inFamous 2,* and *Resistance 3* will be announced and shown at E3...but none of them will be out until 2011. At least we'll have *Metal Gear Rising* to keep us busy next holiday season.

80% The Motion Controller will release (possibly after a slight delay). However, legitimate support may take longer, and ultimately, its impact will be marginal...even though its actually pretty cool.

75% Dedicated cross-game voice chat will finally be implemented. We're thinking late spring.

1 PTOM PREDICTS

Our educated guesses about what will happen in 2010 and the % chance each prediction will come true

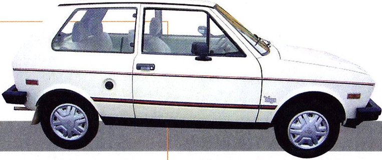


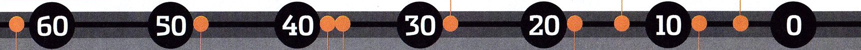
30% *Home* will finally become the hub of your PS3 experience as a host of exciting and innovative new social networking tools are introduced.

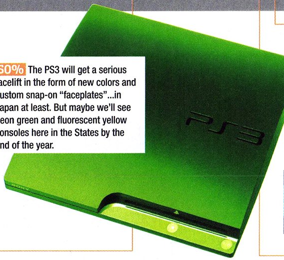
5% PSPgo owners will finally be able to transfer their UMD games to their lovely new system.

70% The PS3 will finally break even with the 360 in terms of overall sales (despite the 360's year-long head start) thanks largely to its $300 price point and exclusives like *God of War III* and *Uncharted 2*.

13% The Yugo will be a selectable ride in *Gran Turismo 5*, but since the game's a simulation, it won't actually run. Available colors: White and Rust.







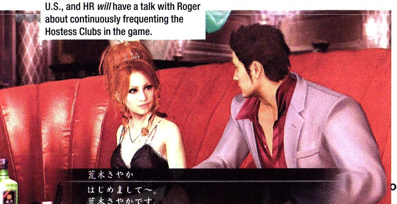
50% The PS3 will get a serious facelift in the form of new colors and custom snap-on "faceplates"...in Japan at least. But maybe we'll see neon green and fluorescent yellow consoles here in the States by the end of the year.

20% Large firmware updates will add all three of the following features: improvements to PSN Gamercards, a more intuitive game invite system, and the ability to install all games to your hard drive to reduce load time.

10% The PS3 will receive another price drop, possibly down to $250. In turn, the PSPgo will drop to just $200.

40% Support for PSP Minis will remain steady thanks to the efforts of small, independent developers, enabling Sony to reduce the price of these games. The iPhone will finally have some competition.

62% Sega *will* bring *Yakuza 3* to the U.S., and HR *will* have a talk with Roger about continuously frequenting the Hostess Clubs in the game.



荒木さやか
はじめまして〜。
荒木さやかです。

38% EyePets will become sentient by late 2010 and begin plotting to enslave the human race.

2 By the Numbers

With PS3 sales finally on the rise, we take a look back at how we got here...and where we're going

The numbers don't lie. Following the launch of the new version of the PS3 on September 1, 2009, Sony went on to sell nearly 492,000 units in the month—in North America alone. That's well over *double* the number sold the previous month. And it's a similar situation around the world. In the first *three days* of going on sale in Japan, 150,823 redesigned PS3s were sold, almost doubling the numbers from its original 2006 launch. And within a week of going on sale in the UK, the smaller, less-expensive form factor saw an increase in sales of 999-percent. That's not a typo—it's a big number.

However, Sony has mentioned that despite this impressive 280-percent year-on-year sales increase, the new PS3 was actually 20-percent behind the first week's sales of the PS2's slim redesign. Sort of shocking given that the PS3 has finally hit its stride and reached a more accessible price point. Naturally, this got us thinking: What other fascinating facts could the history of our platform contain? So here you go—a PlayStation history lesson...by the numbers.

1994

PlayStation

Sony's first PlayStation launched in 1994 (1995 in the U.S.) and shipped 800,000 units in its first year.

2000

PlayStation 2

Launched in 2000, the PS2 is still the best-selling console ever, with over 138 million units sold by 2009. It started strong with 500,000 sold at launch, generating a record-breaking $250 million. The slim line was launched in 2004 and saw sales quadruple in Japan. As a result, the PS2 claimed a 75-percent share of the console market.

2000

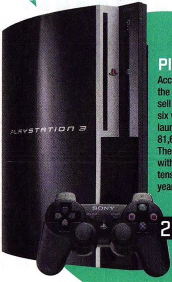
PSone

The redesigned "slim" PlayStation—then called PSone—was launched in 2000 and went on to outsell every console on the market, including the newly launched PS2. By 2008, a total of 125 million PlayStations had been sold.

2004

PSP

The PSP was released in 2004, selling 200,000 at its Japanese launch and 500,000 on day one in the U.S. Despite the equivalent of a $100 price hike for the European launch, it sold 185,000 units in the UK alone.



2006

PlayStation 3

According to Sony, the PS3 was the fastest PlayStation system to sell one million units, taking only six weeks to hit the milestone. It launched in Japan in 2006 and sold 81,639 units in the first 24 hours. The American launch was chaotic with at least one man *shot* when tensions flared in a line. As of this year, it's sold 24.6 million units.

2009

PSPgo

The PSPgo has reportedly increased PSP sales by 120- to 300-percent, depending on territory. To date the PSP has sold a total of 51.99 million units.

2009

PlayStation 3 slim design

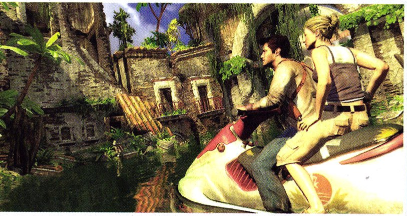
The new PS3 is the fastest redesign of a Sony console yet. Both the PSone and the slim PS2 arrived four years after their respective larger counterparts were launched while the PS3 redesign has taken less than three years. While sales have been strong—more than doubling month-on-month in North America and increasing as much as 1,000-percent in the UK—the PS3 is still lagging behind the mighty PS2 in terms of overall sales.

Will introducing water to *LittleBigPlant* prove to be a refreshing change of pace? Or an error of biblical flood proportions?

3 WATER TORTURE

The worst water levels in PlayStation history

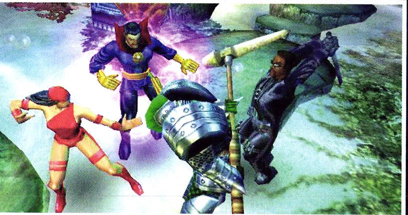
The developers over at Media Molecule are just about ready to bust open the flood gates and introduce water to *LittleBigPlanet*, and while we're sure it'll mean buckets of fun, we can't help but flashback to our traumatic past experiences with water in games. So in honor of what *LBP won't* be, we've documented some of the worst water levels PlayStation has to offer.



Uncharted: Drake's Fortune

THE REGULAR GAME: Breathtaking run-and-jumper that took the best parts of *Tomb Raider* and dragged them out of the '90s.

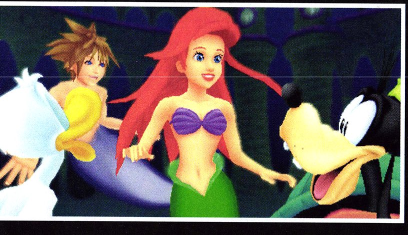
THE WATER LEVEL: While the rest of the game makes you feel like a daring adventurer capable of leaping through ruins, scaling walls, and disarming trigger-happy villains, this damn jet ski handles like a pregnant dump truck on ice and forces you to stop dead in the water if you want to shoot. If you're going to take the time to make a raging rapids level and force us to sloppily churn a path through a river loaded with rocks and bombs, at least let us fire off a couple of rounds while we're zipping along. As it is, stopping allows the flowing water to push you backwards as you attempt to line up a shot, making this the worst PS3-exclusive water level to date.



Marvel Ultimate Alliance

THE REGULAR GAME: Pits the entire Marvel universe against its most menacing villains in a four-player brawl-fest. Basically, a modern-day *Gauntlet* with superpowers.

THE WATER LEVEL: Rather than just let you roam around Atlantis freely (using some magical Dr. Strange spell as a convenient excuse), you're forced to creep through the water as if you're flying through syrup. It's not horrendous in short bursts, but the amount of time you're forced to spend contending with the nightmarish controls is unreasonable. Plus, *Ultimate Alliance* relies heavily on backtracking, so you're often grabbing keys or flipping switches in one area and then retracing your steps to some previous room. Not an immediately repugnant device, but when you're floating along at a snail's pace, even Mephisto's fiery hell sounds better than soggy old Atlantis.



Kingdom Hearts II

THE REGULAR GAME: Mind-blowing tag-team between Disney and Square Enix that blends two distinct empires into one legendary action RPG. Oh wait, that's the first one. The second game is like that with more moping.

THE WATER LEVEL: The game does "pull a water level" by drastically changing the way the game is played, but in this case, it's not with impractical controls or a fidgety camera. Instead, you have to sing along with Ariel, Sebastian, and the rest of Atlantica (from *The Little Mermaid)* as countless fish prance around to a busted-ass rhythm mini-game. One of the defining annoyances of all water levels is the sudden change in how the game handles, both in terms of the character controls and the in-game physics. *Kingdom Hearts II* manages to avoid these ongoing problems by completely switching genres with a lazy, torturously long song-and-dance number. Which is worse?

www.fileradar.net

OLETO
TICKET

DEMOS

MODS

PATCHES

EXPAND. GAMIN

fileradar.

This is the premier, next-gen game links site, built for the community by the community. FileRadar not only puts the power of game file distribution in your hands, but lets you feedback to save everyone a load of time and grief. It takes the power of a site like Digg and applies it to the most essential part of games you're either actually playing or want to play:

The Download.

There are millions of places Net-wide to download from, and only FileRadar umbrellas them all while empowering you to tell each other not only which are the best files to get, but what are the fastest and easiest places to get them from. With a thriving community of informed gamers all networked together to either be the first to playtest a hot new game or enhance the games they already love, how can you go wrong?

You can't, and neither can FileRadar.net.

G KNOWLEDGE

4 ACTIVISION DIDN'T WANT MODERN WARFARE

Infinity Ward studio head **Vince Zampella** reveals all

On making Modern Warfare: "Activision didn't want *Modern Warfare.* They thought working on a modern game was risky and 'Oh my God, you can't do that.' They were doing market research to show us we were wrong the whole time."

On bettering Modern Warfare: "It's a daunting task. The game exploded past our wildest expectations. There's a lot of fans out there that have supported us, and you want to deliver to them an experience that's not disappointing in any way."

On the new multiplayer: "There are loads of new features: customizable killstreaks, deathstreaks, more Create-A-Class classes, customizations, multiple attachments. There's even power ups on the Perks so you can level them up."

On Taskforce 141: "It's an international coalition. They're generally put together based on the needs of the mission. It'll be Delta Force, it'll be Rangers, it'll be SAS, the CIA—they'll put them all together to be able to do specific missions. Things like capturing high-value targets."

On Captain Price: "If you believe the Internet, there's speculation that he's dead, he's alive, he's living with 2Pac..."

On changing the name: "It has always been *Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*. Now we purposely left *[Call Of Duty]* off because we don't want the game to be called *Call Of Duty 6.* We want it to be *Modern Warfare 2.* We want people to know this is a sequel to *Modern Warfare.* We are trying to separate the brands out a little bit. Other games kind of live in their own space and our games live in this space. That was the intention. What do you call *The Empire Strikes Back?* It's not *Star Wars 2."*

On the technology: "We started with our last engine and then replaced the renderer, [then] we added the streaming. The renderer gives us extra definition in the lighting and the shadows. The streaming technology gives us the ability to have bigger maps, but that is not the big win. The big win is local areas are more detailed because you are able to put in higher resolution textures. Stuff that doesn't drastically change gameplay, but does make it more believable."

TURN YOUR PASSION FOR GAMING INTO A CAREER

Game Art
Bachelor's Degree Program
Campus & Online

Game Development
Bachelor's Degree Program

Game Design
Master's Degree Program

Game Design
Bachelor's Degree Program
Online

RETRO GAMER

© 2009 Full Sail, Inc.

FULL SAIL UNIVERSITY

fullsail.edu

800.226.7625 • 3300 University Boulevard • Winter Park, FL 32792
Financial aid available to those who qualify • Career development assistance
Accredited University, ACCSC

Campus Degrees

Master's
- Entertainment Business
- ▸ Game Design

Bachelor's
- Computer Animation
- Digital Arts & Design
- Entertainment Business
- Film
- ▸ Game Art
- ▸ Game Development
- Music Business
- Recording Arts
- Show Production
- Web Design & Development

Associate's
- Graphic Design

Online Degrees

Master's
- Education Media Design & Technology
- Entertainment Business
- Entertainment Business: *with a Sports Management Elective Track*
- Internet Marketing
- Media Design

Bachelor's
- Computer Animation
- Entertainment Business
- ▸ Game Art
- ▸ Game Design
- Graphic Design
- Internet Marketing
- Music Business
- Web Design & Development

5 GAMING'S GREATEST CLICHÉS

So predictable, this might as well be a drinking game

There's no doubt that the experiences we're having right now on PS3 are more creative, interesting, and experimental than ever. The inventiveness of the *PixelJunk* games, the pioneering first-person acrobatics of *Mirror's Edge,* the incredible cinematic ambitions of *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*—it's all good stuff. But there are some things that will never change. Conventions that are so hardwired into gaming that to escape them would require rethinking the world as we know it. Whether it's mute heroes or stern haircuts, these are the things that are so commonplace they're practically inescapable. Here are the worst of the worst.

Shaved Heads

MOST OVERUSED IN: *Infamous, Fracture, Star Wars: The Force Unleashed, Haze*

Most games feature a wealth of futuristic technology: Incredible robots, amazing weapons, fantastic spaceships, incredible robots firing amazing weapons from fantastic spaceships. So how is it that, in a world filled with gravity guns, time travel, and wristwatch radios, no one has come up with styling wax or a bit of gel. Or a comb, even. Instead, the future is full of military grade-one buzz cuts. Could it be that there's no future for men's grooming in an age of post-apocalyptic space war? Does mankind evolve beyond petty vanity? Or, maybe—just maybe—it's easier to render…

Weak Spots

MOST OVERUSED IN: *Resistance 2, Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time, Killzone 2, Resident Evil 5*

"Hi, is this R&D? It's Grand Overlord Zang here, supreme ruler of the Theta dimension and ruin of man. I had a question about the attack droids. No, no, I'm fine with the measurements; 600 feet is a good size for fusion-powered, robot locust. No, I just wanted to check about the exposed reactor core you've got hanging out the back of the thing. Yeah, the one that glows orange. You don't think that will be a problem? I can't help but think that one man with, say, a machine gun might be able to blow the whole thing up if he shot that a little bit. What's that you say? He'd have to get behind it first? And you're *sure* that won't happen? Okay, well, that's fine then, sorry to bother you."

Accidental Superpowers

MOST OVERUSED IN: *Infamous, Dark Sector, Prototype*

Normally when you catch an exotic virus, you'll writhe in agony for several hours before swearing off fast food forever, and explosions will generally leave you experiencing life as a series of liberally scattered chunks. Not in videogames, though. No, on PS3, you're far more likely to find your disease-riddled or recently exploded body suddenly developing wild and exotic powers. Come on modern medicine, why can't *we* shoot lighting from our hands?

Exploding Barrels

MOST OVERUSED IN: *Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising, Borderlands, Red Faction: Guerrilla, Killzone 2*

This is an easy one: no matter where you go, no matter what war you fight in, there will always be barrels. Barrels apparently filled to the brim with highly unstable explosives that react to just having the word "bullet" whispered at them. The only thing more certain is the fact that guards will never realize the danger. Instead, their first (and last) thought when you burst out shooting will always be, "I'll be *fine* behind this 60-gallon drum of aviation fuel."

Girls Cause Trouble

MOST OVERUSED IN: *Prince of Persia, Resident Evil 4, Dead Space*

Whether she's getting kidnapped, holding some lost secret, or being really pretty, if there's a woman involved, there's a good chance all the bloodshed and carnage will be over her. This isn't sexist; it's just basic game design. Apparently.

The Dead Meat

MOST OVERUSED IN: *Infamous, Call of Duty: World At War, Killzone 2, Resident Evil* series

Are you the only man on the team who can't perform a mission-vital role? Have you, at any point, said something like "this is my last mission" or spoken of a loving fiancé/family/pet iguana? Did the developers refrain from actually giving you a name? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then stop whatever you're doing and get the hell out of there. You couldn't be any deader than if you were wearing a red shirt on *Star Trek*. It's nothing personal, but a sudden senseless loss of life always spices up a flagging second act. If you've made no real impact by that point, don't worry about how you're getting home.

People Are Fine If You Never Speak

MOST OVERUSED IN: *BioShock, Half-Life 2, Call Of Duty* series, *Far Cry*

Just try going an hour without speaking to anyone and see what happens. Chances are, it will probably end with more than a few creeped-out looks or a visit from social services. Either way, people get uneasy around silent people— *especially* silent people carrying guns. But in your average FPS, it's possible to make lifelong friends, discover important information, and coordinate complex attacks on enemy installations all through the medium of insistent staring.

The Judas

MOST OVERUSED IN: *Assassin's Creed, Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time, Mirror's Edge, Brütal Legend*

It's usually the guy with the beard. Not always, admittedly. But chances are, whether you're a secret sect of assassins or a crack team of soldiers, there'll always be one bearded jackass on your team who's just waiting for a vulnerable back to stab. Thing is, they're usually obvious. If your average hero paid a bit more attention, he'd probably save the world a hell of a lot sooner. Things to look out for: does he *look* evil? Even a little bit? If it's a girl, is there a hint of dark make up? Does she turn to the camera after talking to you and mutter things like "Sooner than you think" or "More than you'll ever know." If so, take aim and shoot now.

6 Secretly Sinister

Originally published on gamesradar

You never knew your favorite games were so wrong...

Think you're always playing the good guy? Yeah right. A little simplification is all it takes to expose the moral bankruptcy and social deviancy lurking within the game plots we all know and love. Boil things down to their basic narrative elements and a dark side will bubble to the surface of even the most innocent stories. Read on and find out the kind of horrors you've really been partaking in.

BioShock
A sleeper agent causes the downfall of a rightful ruler, collapses the local social structure, then leaves and takes young girls with him.

Doom
A zealous military man kills visiting foreign dignitaries.

Eat Lead: The Return of Matt Hazard
A has-been star reacts violently to the cancellation of his contract.

Eternal Sonata
A mentally divergent 39-year-old man earns the trust of a terminally ill 14-year-old girl and other disaffected children. He then takes them far away from home.

F.E.A.R.
A young girl is psychologically abused, then treated with prejudice and contempt.

Final Fantasy VII
A troubled youth with delusions of military glory gains control of a terrorist group under false pretenses.

God of War
A disgruntled employee murders his boss and coworkers before attempting suicide. He earns a promotion.

Half-Life 2 (from Valve's The Orange Box)
A disgraced former scientist wages a campaign of terror against the government and endangers the populace by sabotaging a power reactor.

Hitman 2
A serial murderer claims repentance through religion, but goes back to his old ways as soon as money is short.

Katamari Damacy
An irresponsible drunk causes gross damage to public property, then makes his offspring clean up his mess.

Metal Gear Solid
A government puppet kills wronged military veterans.

Pac-Man
An obese compulsive eater gains a sense of empowerment through drug use.

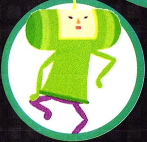
Portal (from Valve's The Orange Box)
An employee breaks professional protocol and causes the destruction of company property.

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time
A headstrong young royal brings trouble to his country in the aftermath of overseas aggression.

Resident Evil 5
A gun-toting American visits a developing nation and loots valuable natural resources while shooting defensive natives. He does so for the sake of freedom.

Silent Hill 2
A disturbed wife-murderer goes on town-wide rampage, killing female health workers.

Tomb Raider
A privileged aristocrat plunders developing countries, killing endangered local wildlife along the way.



Games like *Avatar* offer a few creative uses of the new 3D technology, but do they truly enhance the overall experience or are they merely gimmicks? We think the latter.

7 Depth Perception

Actually, 3D *isn't* the future of gaming. Sorry

3D has been going through a renaissance as of late thanks to recent advances in technology and the serious decline of butts in seats at movie theaters. As a way of encouraging viewers to actually go to a theater to see a film (rather than waiting for its home release) it's proving effective: 3D films offer an experience that's difficult to replicate at home with TV sets and cheap cardboard glasses. So naturally, games want a piece of the action too.

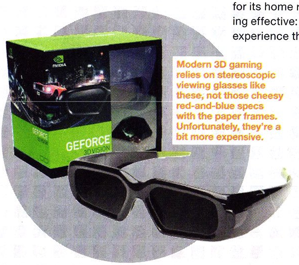
But *playing* something in three dimensions is slightly trickier than slapping a pair of special specs on your face and watching objects pop out of the screen. For an experience on par with the local Cineplex, you'll need a 3D-enabled television (like an expensive, high-end model DLP HDTV) and a pair of 3D glasses—which, at the moment, are costly and difficult to locate. Another problem: many people still play games in standard definition.

The technology will be refined and the specs will eventually decrease in price, but until the days of holographic projections (and, someday, holodecks), 3D will always feel more like a gimmick—a gimmick that, thanks to the nature of the glasses on which it relies, significantly darkens the screen. Imagine playing *Uncharted 2* with a pair of sunglasses on—no fun, right?

Motion controls are supposed to be more "immersive" as well, but anyone who's ever used a Wii can tell you that too many games do it wrong, turning simple tasks into tedious, arm-aching quick-time events. We hope developers will be more ambitious with this extra dimension, but we're not optimistic.

Basically, we've been spoiled by the future visions of *Star Trek* and *X-Men*. As consumers, we want something better than "a bit more depth." We want to reach into our TV screens and shake hands with Nathan Drake (and then wipe our hands off because you don't know where he's been). 3D will only be the future when games stop being games and become interactive holograms instead.

Scott Butterworth



Modern 3D gaming relies on stereoscopic viewing glasses like these, not those cheesy red-and-blue specs with the paper frames. Unfortunately, they're a bit more expensive.

AGREE? DISAGREE?
Send your thoughts on 3D gaming to PTOM_Letters@futureus.com

8 TECH SUPPORT

We tackle the tough questions and arm you with the technical knowhow you'll need to keep on gaming

PLAYSTATION 3

How do I play movies from a flash drive on my PS3?

Your PS3 won't recognize every single type of video file that you throw at it, but it can handle the most common formats. If you are using WMA files then you'll need to go to Settings/System Settings and enable WMA Playback before your PS3 will play them. You might also need to press Triangle on the drive icon and select "show all" for them to be displayed in the first place.

I want to change my PS3 username. How can I do this?

At present there's no way to change your PSN ID. It is possible for you to change the individual name on the user accounts of the PS3, but this won't change the name that appears above your head when in lobbies or during matches online. Sorry.

Can I charge the controller when the PS3 is off?

Unfortunately, no, you'll need to leave the PS3 on if you want to charge your DualShock 3 or download some movies or demos. We're hoping for a patch.

Can I play PSP games online through the PS3's online connection?

Well, for games that support infrastructure multiplayer, you can play online using only your PSP so as long as you're near a Wi-Fi hot spot. However, if you're playing a game that only supports ad hoc (read: local) multiplayer, you can use Ad Hoc Party to play against people online through your PS3. This handy little program was only available in Japan until just recently, but now you can just go download it from PSN.

I've run out of space on my hard drive. How much is it going to cost for an upgrade?

It's probably a lot cheaper and easier than you think. You'll need a 2.5-inch Internal SATA drive. You should be able to find a 320GB one online for under $60 on sites like NewEgg.com. Lots of them are advertised to emphasize compatibility with PS3. In case you missed our warning when we ran our detailed how-to piece in the Oct. '09 issue: be careful when you unscrew the old fastenings—those suckers are fragile.

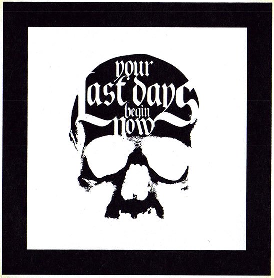
Can I use any USB camera for video and voice chat?

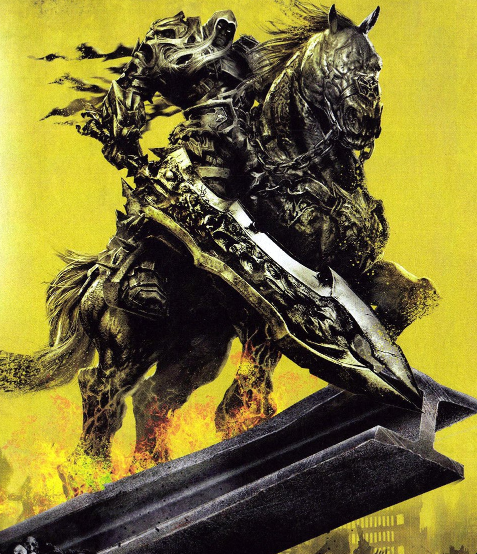
Most USB cameras are compatible with the PS3's built-in video chat, but if you're thinking of *LittleBigPlanet,* sticker creation is only possible if you splash the cash on an official PS Eye camera. But it does come with an integrated mic, so you'll be able to chat away without having to buy a separate headset.

DIDN'T FIND THE ANSWER YOU WERE LOOKING FOR?

Email your question to PTOM_Letters@futureus.com with the subject line "Tech Question" and you just might see your problem solved in a future issue.

DARKSIDERS™





USE THE MARKER ABOVE
TO WATCH HEADS ROLL.

augmented reality
INSTRUCTIONS

1. TURN ON YOUR COMPUTER'S WEBCAM. TURN OFF ANY POP-UP BLOCKERS.
2. PLACE THE PRINTED MARKER FROM THIS MAGAZINE FACE UP ON A FLAT SURFACE.
3. PLACE YOUR WEBCAM SO THAT IT FACES THE MARKER.
4. CLICK LAUNCH TO START THE EXPERIENCE.

XBOX 360 XBOX LIVE darksiders.com

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Suggestive Themes

PS3 PlayStation 3 PlayStation Network VIGIL GAMES THQ

© 2009 THQ Inc. Developed by Vigil Games. Darksiders, Vigil Games, THQ and their respective logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of THQ Inc. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies and are used under license from Microsoft. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks and "PS3" is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The PlayStation Network Logo is a service mark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All other trademarks, logos and copyrights are property of their respective owners.

9 THE QUIZ: FAN VS. DEVELOPER

How much do developers know about their own games? And do their fans know more? PTOM investigates! This month: *BioShock*

THE DEVELOPER

Ken Levine
Creative Director
2K Boston

THE SETUP

PTOM: Would you kindly answer a few questions about your game, *BioShock?*

KEN LEVINE: "Seriously?"

Yes.

"Alright, sure."

THE QUIZ

1 The protagonist's name, Jack, is referenced exactly one time. When?

- A During the opening sequence on the plane.
- B In the audiolog left by Jack's mother in the back of the strip club.
- C When Andrew Ryan reveals Jack's true identity.
- D During the final cutscene of the "good" ending.

"Hmm…oh, I know. It's on the damn letter his parents wrote to him in the opening. 'Cause I remember everyone was like, 'What's his name? What's his name?' And I never even thought about that until I was writing the letter, and I was like, 'Oh I better figure out what his name is,' so I just chose Jack. But I never knew 'til I sat down and wrote that scene."

Correct! And pretty interesting!

SCORE: 1 out of 1

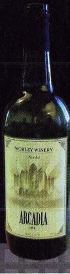
2 In which section of Rapture is the winery located?

- A Farmer's Market
- B Arcadia
- C Fort Frolic
- D Haphaestus

"That's easy. Uh, it's in Arcadia but in the, uh… what's its name? [Listens to options] The Farmers Market! That's easy. Farmer's Market in Arcadia. Next question!"

Correct!

SCORE: 2 out of 2



3 Why did Andrew Ryan choose to hire McDonagh as his general contractor?

- A McDonagh impressed Ryan during his interview for the position.
- B Ryan was familiar with McDonagh's widely known reputation as an engineering genius.
- C The two met previously when McDonagh installed plumbing in Ryan's apartment.
- D McDonagh was the only person Ryan could find who was willing to build a city underwater.

[Without listening to options…] "I totally remember that because I remember writing the scene. McDonagh went to install or fix Ryan's toilet in his apartment in New York, and Ryan liked the cut of his jib so he hired him right on the spot."

Correct! On a roll…

SCORE: 3 out of 3

4 Which firearm cannot be upgraded for increased damage?

- A Crossbow
- B Grenade launcher
- C Pistol
- D Chemical thrower

"How do I know? What are the options? [Listens to options] Pistol?"

Oh! Sorry, the correct answer is "chemical thrower."

SCORE: 3 out of 4

5 What are Andrew Ryan's last words?

- A Kill me!
- B Obey!
- C Would you kindly.
- D Rapture cannot die.

[In a pained, dying Andrew Ryan voice…] "OBBEEEEEEEYYYYY!"

Well done!

WINNER! FINAL SCORE: 4 out of 5

THE FAN

Isaac Detrun Parker
"Ridiculously devoted" *BioShock* fan

- Quizzed by phone to ensure Google-free results

Isaac put up a good fight, but ultimately came up short of the seemingly all-knowing Ken Levine. After a strong start—confidently nailing the first two questions—he hit a brick wall and couldn't quite come up with the answers for questions three, four, and five despite trying valiantly to talk himself through them. Better luck next time, Isaac!

FINAL SCORE: 2 out of 5

10 THE **BURNING** QUESTION

Our question this month:
How did you get your start in the videogame industry? (Part one of an ongoing series.)

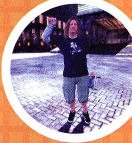
Chris "Cuz" Perry

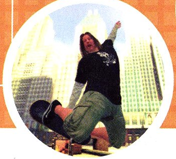
"SOME KIND OF" PRODUCER, BLACK BOX (THE CREATORS OF THE *SKATE* FRANCHISE)

"A partner of mine…we were working at Slam City Jam, the skateboard contest—it was an old one up in Vancouver; it was really popular—so we got known in the skateboard industry. He had an 'in' at EA, and they were developing a skateboard game long before *Skate*—I think they were trying to resurrect *Skate or Die*—and we got the call to be consultants. We were like, 'That's gravy,' you know? 'Hey we're the skateboard guys, let's consult!'

"Unfortunately for us, that game got cancelled, but we got our foot in the door at EA. He got hired on a couple years later as somebody working on *SSX*. After *SSX*, they went back and said, "We want to get a skateboard game going." And then—I'm just glad because he said, "Hey, guess what, Cuz? I'm in, we're going, let's do it!" And from there on it just was gravy. So it was kind of flukey [laughs].

"It's really surreal. I announce contests in real life, and I was announcing a contest last summer and this kid came up after and was like, 'You're the dude! I was playing [the game] this morning!' He said the whole time he was taking his run, he felt like he was in the game."





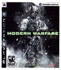
ETCETERA

All the *other* stuff that delights the PTOM crew and distracts us from our work—actually, it's the stuff we should make New Year's resolutions about, but don't.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA
THE COMPLETE SERIES

Battlestar Galactica: The Complete Series | Blu-ray | $175 (Amazon)
What's the dumbest thing you've ever done? Eric's may have been to dismiss *Battlestar Galactica* after the pilot episode, calling it derivative of both the '80s *BSG* series (Why recycle all the nicknames?) and of *Star Trek* (A hot blonde with a number for a name and a robotic personality? How original.) As a result, he missed out on some amazing sci-fi TV—until now. Thanks to this titanic box set, Eric can finally catch up with the year 2004. Next, he's going to rent that "Star Wars" movie everyone keeps talking about…

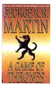
Sony Reader Pocket Edition | Gadget | $200
Although former PTOM Executive Editor and new EIC Gary Steinman's not officially back until next issue, he did drop by to show us a shiny trinket he acquired during his time in *PC Gamer*-land. According to Gary, he resisted e-readers because, frankly, books are pretty perfect as is. But this smaller-sized Sony reader won him over with its awesome e-ink (which is in just about every reader) and sleek interface. Best yet? No DRM, so you can buy what you want, how you want, and put whatever you like on there whenever you want.



Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 | Game | $59.99
What's this? A PS3 game in Et Cetera? Well, as Mikel Reparaz—GamesRadar.com editor and frequent PTOM contributor—says: "If you somehow haven't already picked up a copy of *MW2*, then you're missing out on a treat—the kind of treat that you start with the intention of playing one level, and the next thing you know, it's 4:00 a.m. and the credits are rolling." Mikel plays a *lot* of games, so we're pretty sure he's spot on about this one.

NEW PEOPLE Entertainment Complex | J-culture | Variable
Publisher Viz is known for stellar manga such as *20th Century Boys* and *Black Lagoon*, but its new San Francisco wonderopolis (www.newpeopleworld.com) adds more—lots more. It starts by selling Japanese books, toys, DVDs, music, and Tokyo street fashion. Then it adds a THX-booming, fully HD underground theater rolling the freshest and freakiest in Asian films. Finally, there's an Asian food cafe and an art gallery showcasing such luminary Japanese artists as Yoshitaki Amano (ask a *Final Fantasy* fan). Eric may never go home again.

Night Falls Over Kortedala | Music | $14
Even with the dawning of a new year, some things remain constant: Scott will still be listening to music none of us have ever heard of. Drawing on everything from ABBA to Tom Jones to Buddy Holly, this album is something of a whimsical tour through pop music past…and that just makes the quirky lyrics and soothing timbre of artist Jens Lekman's bari-tenor vocals that much more unexpected. Yet his silly, lovelorn lyrics provide a few lines that are just so ridiculous that you can't help but fall in love with them. Scott says take his advice and check out one of Sweden's finest exports.



A Game of Thrones | Book | $7.99
Roger likes to read books in bunches, so he often seeks out Fantasy book series in order to keep the adventure rolling beyond a few hundred pages. But he's also picky about authors, so after he finishes off all the works of a current favorite, he usually finds himself wandering the literary wilderness searching for the next great epic. Well, George R. R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones* has been around since 1996(!) but he's finally discovered it. At least he won't be re-reading *LOTR* for the eleventy-first time.

Achewood | Webcomic | Free
When Mikel's not delivering headshots in *MW2*, he can be found perusing Cartoonist Chris Onstad's long-running, dryly surreal comic at Achewood.com. An acquired taste, and one that takes a little while to fully understand, *Achewood* centers around the lives of four living stuffed animals, two cartoon cats, and a dirtbag squirrel who drives a tiny van. Strange, but Onstad's well-realized characters and fun stylistic experiments (one recent story arc was structured like an illustrated text adventure) make it worth skimming through the archives.

The Blade Itself
Joe Abercrombie

The Blade Itself | Book | $15
What's this? Unsentimental Fantasy fiction that isn't just a romance novel for boys? It's also Gary's proof to Roger that it is possible to find good Fantasy books published in this *century*. *The Blade Itself* is the first in a fast-moving trilogy that has the pacing of a graphic novel with the depth of literary historic fiction. Also: it boasts the best new character in a good while—Logen Ninefingers, the thinking man's barbarian.

Ciclovía | Idea | For you? Free!
Back in the mid-'70s, the Colombian city of Bogotá decided it needed a break from the heavy traffic that clogged its streets and polluted its air, and declared that every Sunday, the roads would belong to bikers and pedestrians. That's right, *no cars*. Thus, *ciclovía* was born. Recently, an environmental advocacy group has been lobbying for similar events in Los Angeles, and as a longtime denizen of LA, Scott can safely say that a day without cars would do the city a world of good (despite the inconvenience). Read more at LAtimes.com!

Pop Quotes | Twitter | Free
Gary's return doesn't just mark an influx of editorial expertise and knowledge for PTOM, it's also an infusion of hard-earned life experience garnered from…Twitter. Or as Gary puts it: "Forget the second-by-second updates about your friends' sandwich consumption habits. Here's a real reason to finally start a Twitter account—this brilliant collection of salty quotes from a 73-year-old grump." Go to Twitter.com/shitmydadsays for all the wisdom you'll ever need.

Blu-ray Central

An eclectic mix of Horror and Heroes to kick off the year

PlayStation: The Official Magazine
PICK OF THE MONTH

Blu-ray Disc
UNRATED DIRECTOR'S CUT
DRAG ME TO HELL
2 VERSIONS: UNRATED & THEATRICAL
FROM SAM RAIMI, DIRECTOR OF SPIDER-MAN AND THE EVIL DEAD TRILOGY

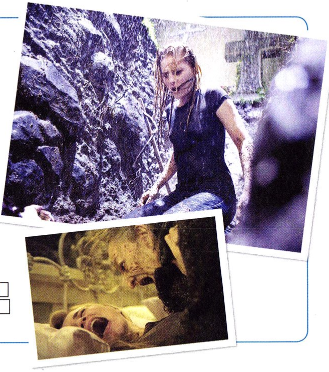
Drag Me to Hell

PRICE: $39.98 **RATED:** PG-13/UNRATED

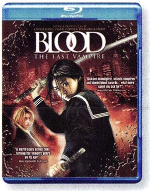
| MOVIE | Perhaps Sam Raimi just needed to clean his palate of superhero shenanigans before moving on. Whatever the reason, *Drag Me to Hell* marks his triumphant return to horror and more than makes up for his *Spider-Man 3* misstep. *The Gift* and *A Simple Plan* proved that Raimi was perfectly capable of making films of greater subtlety and intensity than his *Evil Dead* series, and *Drag Me to Hell* is a perfect marriage integrating facets of both his horror and suspense work. It's also simply the best horror film in quite some time.

| EXTRAS | There's just an in-depth behind-the-scenes montage here, with Justin Long as your guide. It's well done and interesting, which at least partially makes up for the lack of commentary or anything else.

MOVIE ★★★★½
EXTRAS ★★½



Blood: The Last Vampire



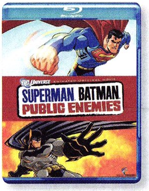
PRICE: $34.95 **RATED:** R

| MOVIE | It's likely that lovers of anime, or goofy Asian action in general, will really want to like this live-action take on the popular anime. *Blood* is fun in a cheesy kind of way. The dialogue is awful, the plot messy, and the action scenes vary between frustratingly bad and cool. Had *Blood* been given a tighter, more coherent script and better action cinematography, it would have been a real revelation. As it is, it's merely an entertaining curiosity.

| EXTRAS | A couple featurettes and a storyboard gallery.

MOVIE ★★½
EXTRAS ★★

Superman Batman: Public Enemies



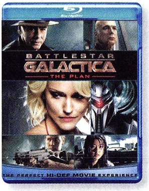
PRICE: $29.99 **RATED:** PG-13

| MOVIE | Warner Bros. and DC Comics are still on a roll with this latest animated superhero release. Although it's hard to recommend paying full-price for a feature that is barely over an hour, fans will love the top-quality adventure anyway. *Public Enemies* is fun, entertaining, and action-packed, making it a worthy addition to the DC collective.

| EXTRAS | As usual, there are some great extras here. The additional cartoon episodes from the *Justice League* and *Superman* shows add immense value, and there are also some well-done documentaries.

MOVIE ★★★★
EXTRAS ★★★★

Battlestar Galactica: The Plan



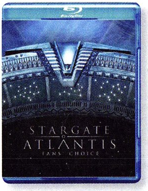
PRICE: $39.98 **RATED:** NR

| MOVIE | As a love letter to fans, this *BSG* feature should make anyone still sad over the conclusion of the show a little happier. Focusing on the Cylon perspective, it gives plenty of insight and drama into characters that were on the periphery in the series. The production quality, pacing, and script are high and as it turns out, Commander Adama (aka Edward James Olmos) is a very talented director.

| EXTRAS | The director and writer commentary is pretty dry, but the deleted scenes are more interesting. There's also a trivia game and documentaries that fans will dive into.

MOVIE ★★★½
EXTRAS ★★★

Stargate Atlantis: Fans' Choice



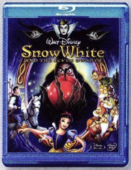
PRICE: $29.98 **RATED:** NR

| MOVIE | It's hard to imagine what Fox/MGM were thinking by releasing only the first and last episodes of the solidly entertaining *Stargate Atlantis* and then calling it the "fans' choice." Surely they could have found some choice-worthy shows in the middle. Sadly, this is the only HD treatment the show has gotten, but for die-hard fans or merely curious viewers, the disc is a decent primer for seeing what *Stargate Atlantis* is all about. Now, if only they'd actually start releasing whole seasons.

| EXTRAS | None...nada...zippo. Apparently, Fox/MGM thinks *SG* fans don't like all that superfluous fluff.

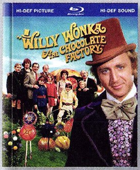
MOVIE ★★★
EXTRAS

Classic Blu



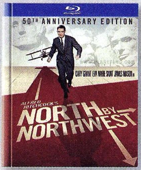
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

Once upon a time, animated movies were all done by hand and here's the proof. *Snow White* has never looked better and comes packed with goodies to share with your kids.



Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory

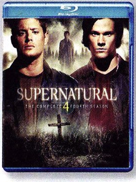
The original and still the best, *Wonka* looks and sounds better than ever, and fans will enjoy the commentary from the now-grown child actors.



Alfred Hitchcock's North by Northwest

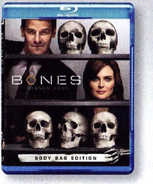
An iconic movie in every way, Warner Bros. has given this classic proper treatment with a beautiful restoration, booklet case, and plenty of solid extras.

Blu TV



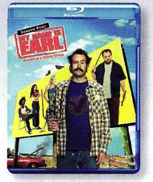
Supernatural: The Complete Fourth Season

Supernatural continues to be one of the most distinct and mature shows on the CW, and has managed to move commendably beyond the cheap clichés and horror movie rip-offs of the first couple seasons.



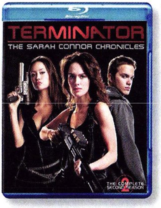
Bones: Season Four

Although dangerously close to jumping the proverbial shark in the last several episodes of this season, *Bones* consistently entertains thanks to clever murders and some of the sharpest, most engaging characters and dialogue on TV.



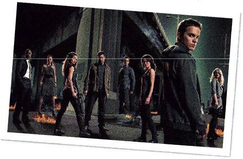
My Name is Earl: Season Four

It's a miracle of karma that *Earl* managed to make it to season two, let alone four, but it's a satisfying end to a quirky and charming show with no shortage of sly humor and clever plotting.



Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles The Complete Second Season

It's very nearly tragic that this improbably good show is over, but at least fans can enjoy the entire run thanks to a great Blu-ray release.



Questions, comments, rants, raves about our Blu-ray reviews? Email Jason D'Aprile at **PTOM_Bluray@futureus.com.**

Win Terminator Salvation

Buy it on Blu-ray™, DVD, Digital Download and On Demand 12/1/09!

In the aftermath of Judgment Day and the takeover by the machines, John Connor (Christian Bale), the destined leader of the human resistance, must counter Skynet's devastating plan to terminate mankind. As he rallies his underground resistance fighters for a last, desperate battle, Marcus Wright (Sam Worthington), a mysterious loner from the past, challenges him with an impossible choice that will determine the future of the human race.

Sounds good, right? You won't know until you see the movie—which you could do by just buying or renting it, but which you could also do by firing up ye olde computero and sending an email to PTOM_TERMINATETHIS@futureus.com with the phrase "John Connor is Batman" in the subject line by January 12, 2010. One email entry per person please, and be sure to read the tiny-type rules at the bottom of this very page. Good luck!

http://terminatorsalvation.com/

Terminator Salvation © 2009 T Assets Acquisition Company, LLC. Artwork © 2009 Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. Distributed by Warner Home Video. All rights reserved.

Rules

No purchase is necessary to win and as a contestant you have not yet won. One entry per person; multiple entries will be discarded. Entries must be received no later than January 12, 2010. The winners will be chosen on or about January 13, 2010, and will be notified by email (or regular mail). The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. The sponsor of the contest is Future US, Inc. ("Future US"), 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Five prizes will be awarded. Each prize consists of one (1) copy of *Terminator Salvation* (Director's Cut) on Blu-ray ($35.99 value). Winners will be determined by a single random drawing of all valid entries and the decision of Future US shall be final. You may obtain the names of the winners by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address above. This contest is open to residents of the United States only. Entrants must be at least 18 years of age. For a complete list of rules, go to www.playstationthemagazine.com/officialrules

12 months. 40 pages. 110 games and counting... This is the year to come

PS3 in 2010

SHOOTERS → MAG → Kane & Lynch → Army of Two → Lost Planet → Singularity → BioShock →

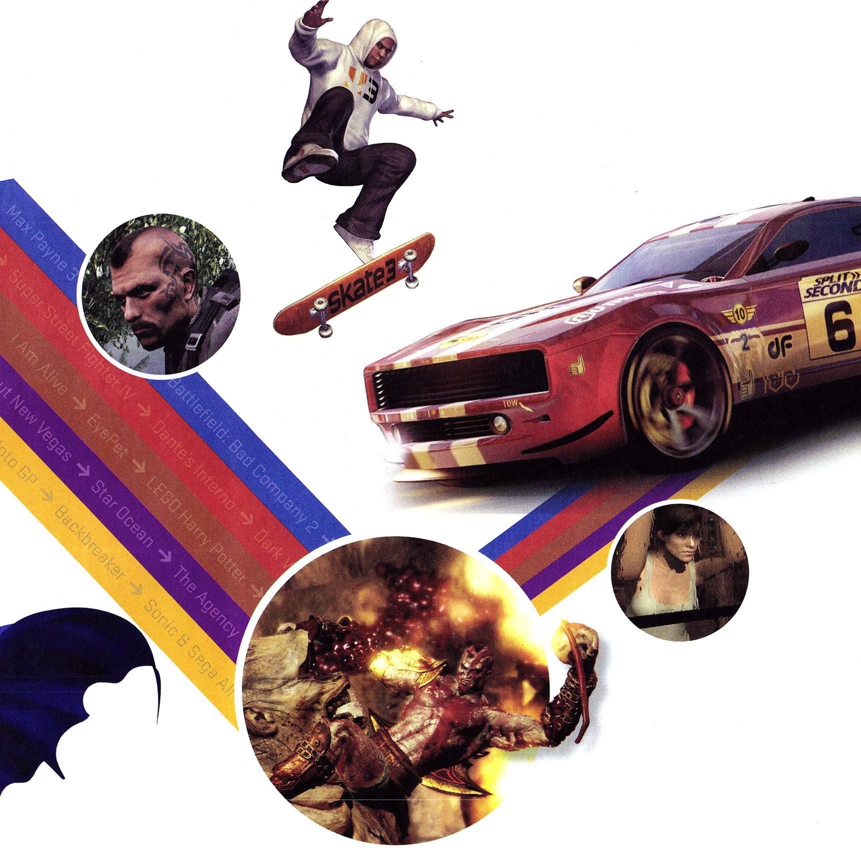
ACTION → God of War III → Bayonetta → Enslaved → Darksiders → Heist → Dance Dance Revolutio

ADVENTURE → Heavy Rain → Just Cause 2 → Red Dead Redemption → Yakuza 3 → Ride to Hell

RPG → White Knight Chronicles → Final Fantasy XIII → Resonance of Faith → Alpha Protocol →

DRIVING & SPORTS → Split/Second → Blur → Gran Turismo 5 → ModNation Racers → Skate

What you are about to read isn't an article—it's an epic. Rather than just give you a handful of previews this month, we wanted to deliver a massive omnibus filled with details on literally more than 100 PS3 games. So we did. Yes, it's huge. Yes, it'll take you awhile to get through it all. But we needed this much space to showcase all that 2010 is already promising to deliver. Suit up, strap in, and prepare to be bludgeoned in the brain by gaming greatness—this is going to be a monster of a year.


Max Payne 3
Battlefield: Bad Company 2
Super Street Fighter IV
Dante's Inferno
Dark V
I Am Alive
EyePet
LEGO Harry Potter
ut New Vegas
Star Ocean
The Agency
oto GP
Backbreaker
Sonic & Sega All
skate3
SPLIT SECOND
6
10
2
TOW
dF

Contributors: Eric Bratcher, Scott Butterworth, Amanda Glasser, Joe Newman, Douglass C. Perry, Mikel Reparaz, Rob Smith

MAG

→ All the details you won't find in the beta, straight from the developers

A 256-player online shooter sounds like a fairly straightforward concept, right? Get a giant group of gamers together, slap some guns in their hands, and watch the mayhem unfold. Well, not quite. While *MAG* does offer all the first-person shootouts that you'd expect from such a title, it's layered with complex player progression and leadership roles, which lend an unexpected but entirely welcome level of depth to the action-packed experience.

But as we noted in our lightning-fast hands-on with the beta (see Holiday 09 issue), how do you keep everything straight when there's so much going on? As if having 255 other people running around the same map wasn't enough to throw you off, try sticking with your squad and accomplishing the objectives issued on-the-fly by your leaders as mortar blasts rip holes in allies (not to mention *you).* We don't know about you guys, but we were a bit overwhelmed, so we decided to talk to developer Zipper Interactive about what we can expect when the full version of the game launches next year. Fortunately, it turns out we won't be thrown into the deep end like we were in the beta. The team explains…

← Training

Ben Jones, Lead Designer: "We've got a pretty extensive training program. Each faction has its own basic training mission set within a specific environment. We try to do a little story telling there as well. It basically takes you through all the core mechanics of the game in a single-player environment: movement, shooting, gear items, repairing objects, driving vehicles, activating objectives… Once players are able to do that, we give them a one-time experience reward that allows them to rise through the ranks faster and access other game types sooner. Beyond that, we've got a series of training slides that players can look through and not only learn about the game, but specific items that they might want to purchase down the road, the options that become available to them when they opt in for leadership roles—all these different things."

↙ Domination maps come with a 30-minute time limit. If the attackers win, a round could be over in just a few minutes. But if the defenders win, it will take a full half-hour.

> "When you're defending a mission, it's themed to fit the look and style of your PMC. So you've got kind of a home field advantage."

← Match Types

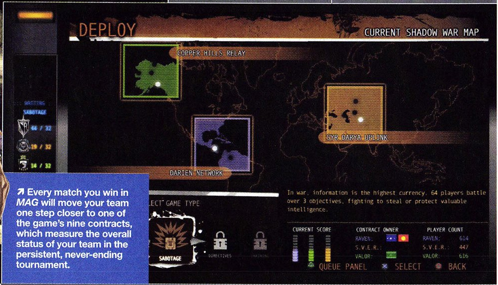
CJ Heine, Lead Designer: "The first [match type] that you'd normally go into would be Suppression, and Suppression is like a training area where you're going up against members of your own PMC [Private Military Corporation]. It's a Team Deathmatch at its core, and it's just a way to get people's feet wet without needing to rely on any kind of leadership or high-end command abilities or any knowledge of objectives or anything like that.

"Once you've gone up a little bit more [in experience and rank], the next thing you'll have access to is Sabotage. In the final version of the game, Sabotage will unlock at level three. So what we want is players to gain a couple levels just in the core shooter before getting into some of our advanced modes, and Sabotage is kind of a very simple objective mode. We do introduce some squad-leadering at the time, so squad leaders can frago objectives (i.e. adjust orders) if they need to, but there aren't command abilities in the missions themselves. There's no mortars or sensors or UAV strikes or anything like that.

"After that, we get into Acquisition, which opens up at level five. It's the 128-player 'steal their prototype vehicle' mission. The attackers are going up against this heavily defended compound that is protecting some prototype vehicles that another PMC is trying to protect. Your goal is to get past the front line, take out the anti-air, set up your own forward spawns, and then move in and take the vehicles and get them back out. In that style of play, we introduce some of the platoon leader abilities: strafing runs and some of those larger abilities, in addition to all the squad-leading abilities [like frago orders].

"Beyond the 128s, we get into the 256s [called Domination], and that one unlocks at level seven or so. And those are the most complex game modes, which is why we've kind of set them aside. We want players to make sure they've got enough experience...to really get in there and get the most out of it. In those missions, it's basically four platoons of attackers all pushing to try to get to the defenders that are guarding an oil-related facility in the middle of that map.

"When you're defending a mission, it's themed to fit the look and style of your PMC. So in a Valor defended mission, it's a lot greener and it helps camouflage the Valor players more. So as you're defending, you've got kind of a home field advantage, and we want the defending force to feel comfortable in that area, like they have a mastery of the map because they'll constantly be defending it. They'll always only be defending their own maps, and they're always only going to be attacking the other PMC's maps."



In war, information is the highest currency. 64 players battle over 3 objectives, fighting to steal or protect valuable intelligence.

CURRENT SCORE	CONTRACT OWNER	PLAYER COUNT	
RAVEN:		RAVEN:	614
S.V.E.R.:		S.V.E.R.:	447
VALOR:		VALOR:	616

↗ Every match you win in *MAG* will move your team one step closer to one of the game's nine contracts, which measure the overall status of your team in the persistent, never-ending tournament.

↗ Team Work

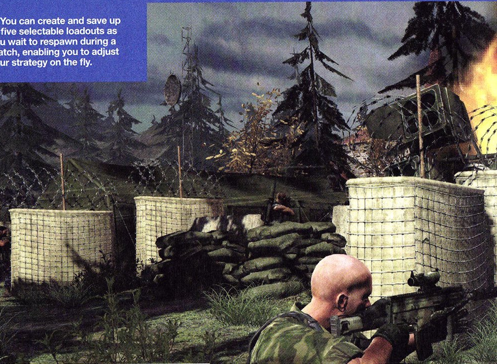
Joe Maris, Senior Designer: "So you've got the three different PMCs that are vying for these contracts. There's three contracts per major game type—Sabotage, Acquisition, and Domination. At any one time, there will be one faction with two, one faction with one, and one faction with zero contracts per game type. Once you've unlocked the contract, [in the awards tab] you'll see things for the different contracts that are being awarded to your faction. So you can get stuff like XP bonuses for your entire faction while you own that contract, or greater leadership aura radius or [shorter] cool-down times for command abilities. So you really have an incentive to go out and get these because not only does it help you as a team, it also helps you as an individual. So when I log in every day, I'm going to look and see what contracts I have first."

Ben Jones: "You *can* succeed as an individual: you can build out your character as fast as you want, you can become a really, really strong player, and you can—as a single player, in a lot of cases—win the game. But for the most part, the teams that are most successful are the ones that work together, communicate well, time their strikes and abilities—all these things. When you're going up against an opposing team, you can really tell if they're organized or not. If they're a bunch of lone wolves, it's going to be very much different than some other group that's really cohesive. You're going to know it pretty quickly."

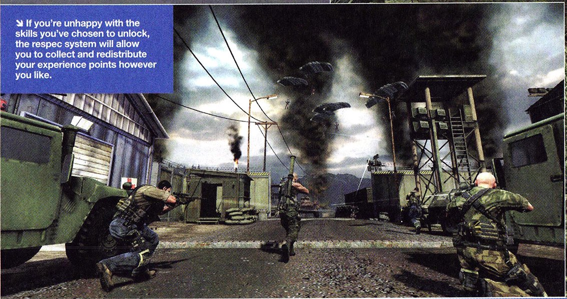
Player Progression ➔

Joe Maris: "Whenever you level up, you get a skill point. And for every [upgrade] category, you have to spend a certain number of skill points on the stuff that's available earlier before you can get to the higher stuff. We really want people to be able to get deep into one tree pretty quickly, and we don't want to be as restricted to classes as other games have been. We want to give people the ability to mix and match skills, but we don't want to have it become some sort of super-soldier thing. In our experience, in other games, that's just kind of lame. But at the same time, you can put together some interesting combinations. If you want to be a specialist in sniping *and* machine guns, you can do that. Though it does come at the relative cost of a broader skill set. So if you really want to specialize in a couple things, that's great, that's kind of what we want you to do. But if you want to try a little bit of everything, you have enough points to get the first several items out of each of the different skill trees."

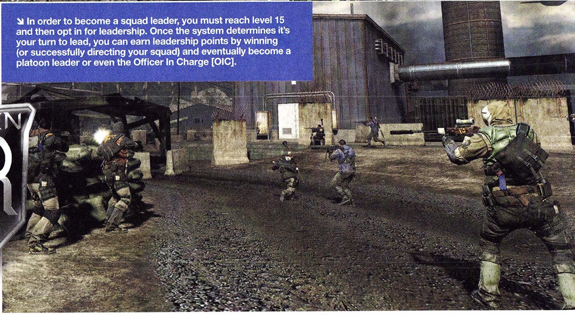
Joe Maris: "You have 60 total points assuming you make it all the way to the top, and you can spend them wherever you want. But we also have a 'respec' bar system where, as you earn experience, you also earn the ability to respec. When the respec bar is full, if you say, 'You know, this just isn't working for me. I want to start completely from scratch...' You can, because you've filled up your respec bar. In the early stages, you're going to be able to fill up that respec bar pretty quickly. So if you're still kind of feeling your way through the game and you get to level 20 and you're like, 'Gosh, this still isn't working,' you're going to be able to redistribute your skill points without completely starting over. But eventually, if you've respeced five or six times, the fifth or sixth time...well, you're going to have to do a little more work there."



➘ You can create and save up to five selectable loadouts as you wait to respawn during a match, enabling you to adjust your strategy on the fly.

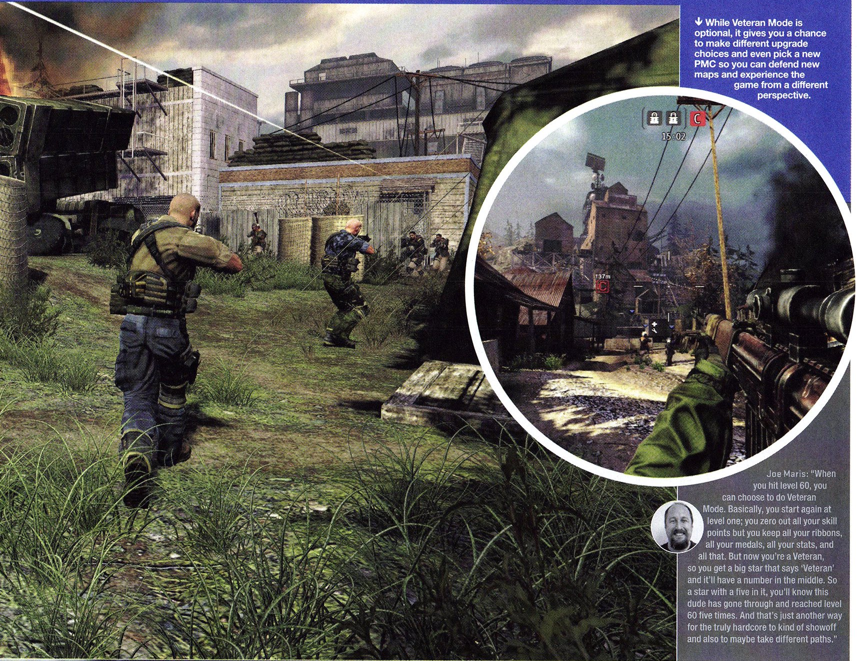


➘ If you're unhappy with the skills you've chosen to unlock, the respec system will allow you to collect and redistribute your experience points however you like.



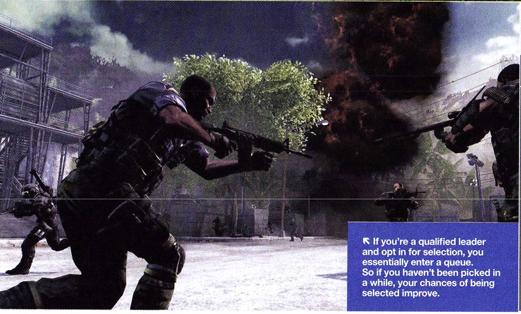
➘ In order to become a squad leader, you must reach level 15 and then opt in for leadership. Once the system determines it's your turn to lead, you can earn leadership points by winning (or successfully directing your squad) and eventually become a platoon leader or even the Officer In Charge [OIC].

> "We want to give people the ability to mix and match skills, but we don't want to have it become some sort of super-soldier thing...that's just kind of lame."



↓ While Veteran Mode is optional, it gives you a chance to make different upgrade choices and even pick a new PMC so you can defend new maps and experience the game from a different perspective.

Joe Maris: "When you hit level 60, you can choose to do Veteran Mode. Basically, you start again at level one; you zero out all your skill points but you keep all your ribbons, all your medals, all your stats, and all that. But now you're a Veteran, so you get a big star that says 'Veteran' and it'll have a number in the middle. So a star with a five in it, you'll know this dude has gone through and reached level 60 five times. And that's just another way for the truly hardcore to kind of showoff and also to maybe take different paths."



↖ If you're a qualified leader and opt in for selection, you essentially enter a queue. So if you haven't been picked in a while, your chances of being selected improve.

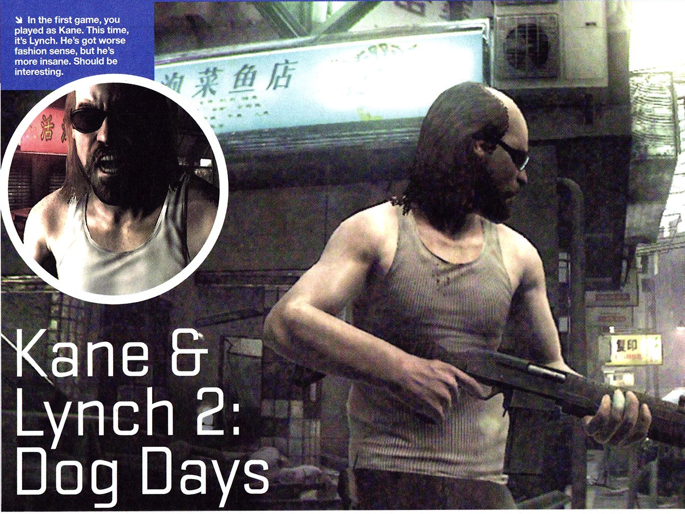
← Leadership

Ben Jones: "In order to level up in leadership you must prove your leadership, you have to win. We've got a separate screen for leadership that tracks your leadership points at all times, and it'll go through and tell you not only the requirements to get to each of these, but the bonuses that you receive and give out once you're there. These are things that players get, not just strikes, but stuff like faster healing and better armor protection for everybody within your 'aura.' That's pretty strong incentive for players to stay within their leadership groups and move together."

CJ Heine: "It's kind of an interesting balance too, because with one OIC, we do give them some really large abilities like speeding up or slowing down the respawn cycles for your team or the opposing team. So they do have access to some really big abilities, but they're not critical to the overall outcome of the game. A lot of that falls on the squad leaders, and we will have 16 of those [on each team] per 256-player match. So they're the guys calling out the fragos and their command abilities are usually a little bit more usable in a lot of cases—they have a quicker cool down. So it really falls on the squad leaders to win the games." ■

➔ Where shooters and documentaries collide

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days



In the first game, you played as Kane. This time, it's Lynch. He's got worse fashion sense, but he's more insane. Should be interesting.

At times, it's almost difficult to make out what's happening. The picture shakes violently as if filmed by a panicked bystander. The grainy image falls momentarily out of focus before snapping back into view as the video appears to decompress. It feels like an episode of *COPS* or a caught-on-tape clip of some sensational disaster. But this isn't a home movie, and we aren't on YouTube. This is a videogame. Specifically, this is *Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days*.

According to the developers, the game's new "raw footage" visuals are intended not only to cultivate a sense of frantic urgency within the action but to underscore the gritty nature of the game as well. The plot this time focuses mainly on Lynch—the heavily medicated psychopath (who recently

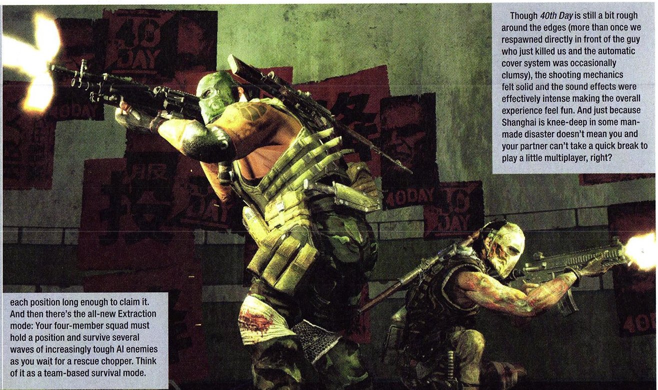
Army of Two: The 40th Day

Pub: Electronic Arts | Dev: EA Montreal
ETA: January 12

How's this for a little creative math: a Team Deathmatch mode that features several teams of two rather than two teams of several. That's exactly what you can expect from Shanghai-based shooter *Army of Two: The 40th Day*, which is so committed to co-op gameplay that even the competitive multiplayer pits you and a buddy against other heavily armed duos in a battle for kills and the points that come with them (bonus points for downing two partners at once).

Of course, Co-Op Deathmatch isn't your only option. You can also choose the more traditional Control, which challenges two teams of up to six players to capture randomly spawned control points by camping each position long enough to claim it. And then there's the all-new Extraction mode: Your four-member squad must hold a position and survive several waves of increasingly tough AI enemies as you wait for a rescue chopper. Think of it as a team-based survival mode.

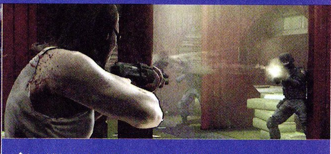
Though *40th Day* is still a bit rough around the edges (more than once we respawned directly in front of the guy who just killed us and the automatic cover system was occasionally clumsy), the shooting mechanics felt solid and the sound effects were effectively intense making the overall experience feel fun. And just because Shanghai is knee-deep in some man-made disaster doesn't mean you and your partner can't take a quick break to play a little multiplayer, right?



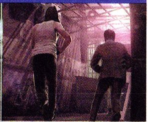
Unless you get shot in the head, your teammate will have a chance to revive you before you die. It pays to stick together.

A point value pops up every time you off an enemy. Whether this is a scoring mechanism or if it amounts to something more remains to be revealed.

➔ Whether you're playing with a friend or not, the game features several co-op moments, from splitting up to distract your enemies to helping each other up a wall.



🡑 In addition to full online co-op (potentially), the developer promises that the celebrated Fragile Alliance multiplayer will return.



decided to go *off* his meds)—rather than Kane—the former-military ex-con with serious family issues.

A few years after the events of the first game, Lynch has retreated to Shanghai where he can put his criminal talents to work without having to move too deeply underground. But despite his circumstance, he's attempting to put his life of crime behind him to lead a peaceful life with his girlfriend, Xiu…until, of course, everything goes wrong during his very last deal and the Chinese mob decides to rain hell on him and his partner.

This focus on the impulsive, unpredictable Lynch should—much like the visual style—create frantic, brutal gameplay that contrasts with the more tactical approach of the previous game, which followed the somewhat saner Kane. Despite this, the action relies heavily on a hard cover system (press X to attach to any applicable object), and run-and-gunners may find themselves on the fast track to the morgue.

Even cover may not save you in *Kane & Lynch 2,* though. The environments teem with gritty details, from puddles in the cracked sidewalks to graffiti on the derelict buildings, and they're filled with destructible objects and degradable cover—like wooden walls that explode into splinters if you attempt to take cover behind them during a shootout.

Fortunately, the game features a regenerating health system and a "down but not dead" mechanic that enables you to either continue firing from the ground or crawl to cover for safety. The aiming system and enemy AI have also been improved to give you more of a fighting chance. Plus, you should be able to drag a co-op buddy along to save you (either online or off, if the developers succeed in their plans). The real fight will be deciding who gets to be Kane and who gets to be Lynch. ■

Lost Planet 2

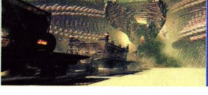
Pub: Capcom | Dev: Capcom
ETA: February 23

➘ The planet's no longer a giant frozen snowball, but it's still infested with giant, glowing abominations. Don't plan to vacation here just yet.

The PS3 version of the first *Lost Planet* hit a full year after the 360 version and had worse graphics—that was not cool. But we still had a legitimate blast jumping into a battlemech and gunning the glowing weak points of dinosaur-sized spacebugs until they exploded. The sequel (which is being developed alongside the 360 version, so it should be just as good) is packing bigger baddies, more bombastic gear, and a ton more gameplay variety, including some unique multiplayer modes.

Lost Planet 2 takes place on the same world as the first game, the elegantly named E.D.N. III (get it?), but the surface has been terraformed. So, instead of one planet-sized ice level, you'll get to play through dense jungles, parched deserts, and so on. However, the planet's monstrous wildlife seems to love this climatic upheaval and has become more diverse and much, much larger. Recent screenshots show off a giant worm that looks like it could swallow an aircraft carrier.

Luckily, your arsenal has expanded as well. You'll have a wider range of machine guns, lasers, and rocket launchers (some customizable) than before, and you've still got your grappling hook—not a weapon so much as a "get me outta here" device. Best of all, you'll get several new flavors of Vital Suit (read: mech packing massive artillery), some of which can transform into other forms or enable one player to drive while two more man the guns. They'll figure heavily in the multiplayer modes, which include a four-player co-op battle against gargantuan boss monsters as well as 16-player Versus modes that promise the kind of heavy customization you'd see in a realistic military shooter.



🡐 The critters are BIG this time. See this shot? That's a giant worm's mouth. No, not the little part sticking out—the entire "canyon" wall.

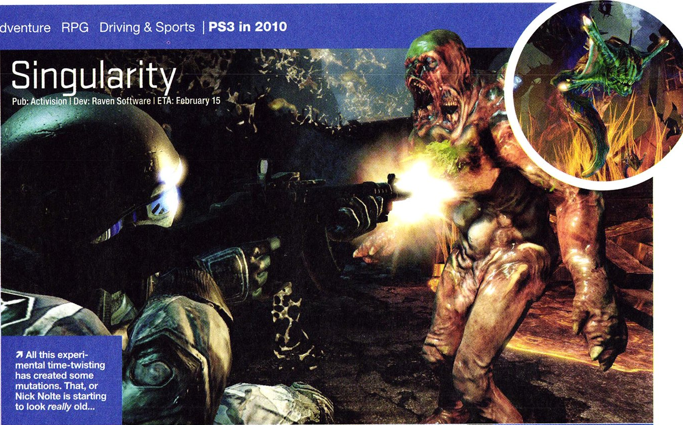
Singularity

Pub: Activision | Dev: Raven Software | ETA: February 15

First-person shooter *Singularity* is one of those games whose "hook" sounds simple, almost quaint—but the more you think about it the more you realize it's a huge twist that can change everything.

In this case, it's the ability to control the flow of time. But this isn't just rewinding the last 10 seconds so we can avoid an untimely death. This is complete control over 60 years of time on an item-by-item, being-by-being basis. It's the ability to force an enemy to live out his entire life and crumble to dust in five seconds, right before your eyes. The ability to take a rusty, crushed barrel and rewind to when it was shiny, red, and full of explosive gasoline just waiting to be ignited with a gunshot. Or the power to raise and reconstruct a sunken cargo ship from its watery grave so you can board it and search out needed information—assuming you survive the monsters on board. This kind of time control is no parlor trick; this is power.

Or, you could just blast everything you see full of holes. Your time control device—yes, it's a wristwatch—is also a gravity gun capable of ripping a shield right out of an enemy's hands, leaving him vulnerable. And time-twisted ecological oddities like "Phase Ticks"—insects that turn people into zombie-like monsters but revert to grenades if you time-zap them—provide even more creative murder methods (and targets). We can't wait to see how this one turns out.

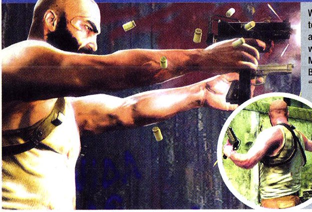


↗ All this experimental time-twisting has created some mutations. That, or Nick Nolte is starting to look *really* old...

← As much as we enjoy shotgunning a mutated ugly right in the face, there's something really satisfying about using a time shot to age them 60 years at once, instantly melting them into atoms.

Max Payne 3

Pub: Rockstar Games | Dev: Rockstar Vancouver | ETA: June

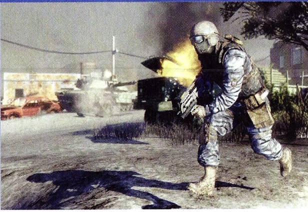


We've only seen one teaser so far, but we're already excited to see where the saga of Max Payne is going. Bald, bearded, and "more world-weary and cynical than ever," our favorite bullet-time acrobat is looking more badass than ever, too.

Battlefield: Bad Company 2

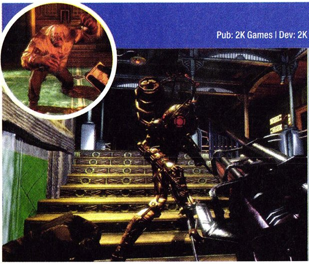
Pub: Electronic Arts | Dev: EA Digital Illusions CE | ETA: March 2

Even if you liked *Battlefield 1943,* you might find the modern setting of *Bad Company 2* a refreshing change and right up your alley. Plus, we hear that downloading *Battlefield 1943* will unlock WWII-era weapons in *Bad Company 2's* multiplayer mode. Nice.



BioShock 2

Pub: 2K Games | Dev: 2K Marin | ETA: February 9



There were some who didn't want *BioShock 2* . "It'll ruin the first game's ending" they said. Funny, you don't hear that sentiment much nowadays—it's because *BioShock 2* looks INCREDIBLE. New enemy splicers, a new arch-boss (Big Sisters—that's *plural)* and cool multiplayer mean we're ready for our drill-hands, please.

Brink

Pub: Bethesda Softworks | Dev: Splash Damage | ETA: May 18

What is *Brink?* Think class-based FPS action like in *Team Fortress 2,* but with more sophisticated missions and a single, player-customized character who just swaps gear when you switch classes. Oh, and who can also pull off *Assassin's Creed*-style parkour moves while blasting fools in the brain. It's hot.

Quantum Theory

Pub: Tecmo | Dev: Team Tachyon | ETA: March 1

Could this Japanese-made title be the PS3's answer to *Gears of War?* Maybe, maybe not—however, we're particularly interested in the relationship between muscle-bound hero Syd and his reluctant partner-in-crime Filena. We wonder—can love bloom on the battlefield?

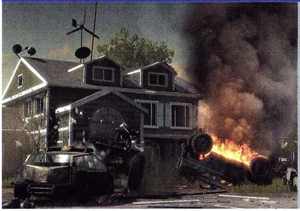
Dead to Rights: Retribution

Pub: Namco Bandai | Dev: Volatile Games | ETA: February

Take control of one-man army Jack and his trusty dog Shadow, disobey direct orders from your law-enforcement superiors, and bring down the crime networks that plague Grant City. It's got a dog, guns, and vigilante justice… and it's looking particularly brutal.

Homefront

Pub: THQ | Dev: Kaos Studios | ETA: TBD 2010



While we don't know much about how FPS *Homefront* will innovate in the gameplay department, we *do* know the story involves a near future in which North Korea has seized control of America's resources and industries. Will *you* lead the Resistance?

Inversion

Pub: Namco Bandai | Dev: Saber Interactive | ETA: TBD 2010

You can see some early coverage of this innovative title in our December 09 issue, but all you really need to know is that Namco Bandai's new FPS always has loads of guns, but only sometimes has gravity.

Aliens vs. Predator

Pub: Sega | Dev: Rebellion Developments | ETA: February

Play as an Alien, a Predator, or a human Marine in this slick shooter. As you might imagine, the Marine is screwed. *But,* if you can organize a team of Marines, expect some cool *Left 4 Dead*-esque co-op action.

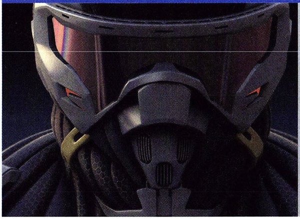
Nier

Pub: Square Enix | Dev: Cavia | ETA: TBD 2010

Square Enix's work carries a certain pedigree, especially when it comes to quality storytelling and visual flair. *Nier* looks more action-packed than the RPGs we usually associate with Squeenix, but we don't know much else about it...yet.

Crysis 2

Pub: Electronic Arts | Dev: Crytek | ETA: TBD 2010

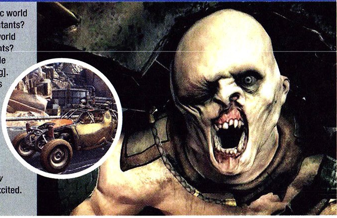


The original *Crysis* was an amazing graphical tour de force, complete with lush jungle vegetation—that quickly turned into a flash-frozen ice forest—tense FPS action and a story about aliens, soldiers, and a very bitchin' super-suit. The sequel? It's going to be way better. We'll keep you informed.

Rage

Pub: Electronic Arts | Dev: id Software | ETA: TBD

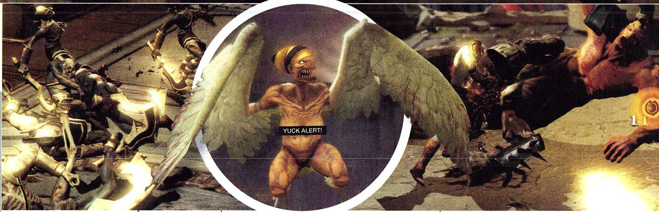
Post-apocalyptic world inhabited by mutants? Seen it. Open-world sandbox elements? Common. Vehicle sections? [shrug]. The developer is id software—creators of *Doom, Quake,* and arguably the entire FPS genre? That changes everything. *Now* you've got us excited.



God of War III

→ Nine things you need to try in the *God of War III* demo

By now, those of you who've pre-ordered the *God of War Collection* will have finally had a chance to sample the *God of War III* demo that the gaming press has been talking about for nearly a year. And though we've played it a dozen times through by now, we keep finding more things we can do—like using the chain-hilted Blades of Chaos to haul Kratos, grappling hook-style, right onto a Centaur's face. The demo is calculated to give eager Kratos fans a little taste of almost everything that's new for the third game; here's what you can look forward to...



↑ Charge hordes of enemies

Tearing undead warriors in half has always been an endless source of fun in *God of War,* but this time Kratos has a few new grab moves up his sleeve. In addition to the classic overhead rip, Kratos can throw his foes or simply bludgeon them in the face a couple times before ripping their heads off. Or he can pick them up and run with them, using them as a battering ram to send their comrades flying. This is especially useful for clearing the thicker hordes of enemies you'll find surrounding your badass self.

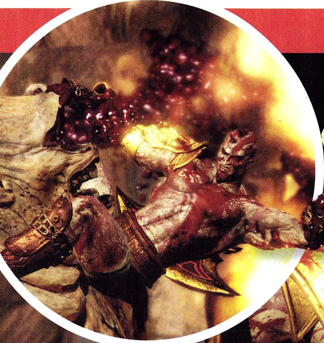
↑ Ride a Harpy

The ever-irritating bird-creatures of previous *God of Wars* are back once again (and *damn,* are they ugly), but this time they actually serve a purpose. Rather than just stomping them into the ground and tearing their wings off, Kratos can provoke them with a shot from his bow, then grab them when they get close and ride them over chasms and other seemingly impassable areas. They'll only last for a little while, though, meaning you'll often find yourself jumping from harpy to harpy in midair.

↑ Gut the Centaur

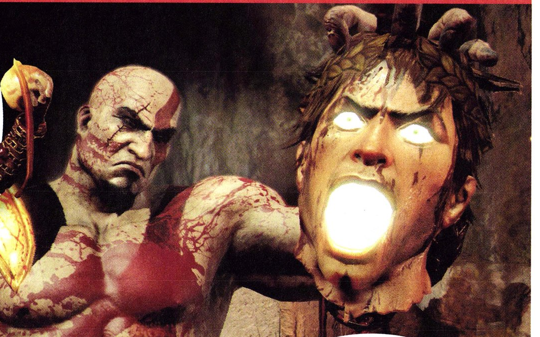
GoW III also introduces "commander" enemies, which can make their skeleton-warrior hordes much more effective. While the Centaur commander you'll fight doesn't display a lot of leadership, he *does* display the game's "zipper technology," which basically means that when Kratos slits open his belly at the end of a brief quick-time sequence fatality, you can expect to see loops of intestine and squishy organs falling out.

GOD OF WAR III | PS3 | Available: March | Publisher: SCEA | Developer: SCEA Santa Monica



← Ride a Cyclops

After you've shot down Helios' sun-chariot, you'll have to smash through his personal guard, which includes a bunch of skeletons with thick shields and one towering Cyclops. No matter—just beat on the Cyclops enough, and you'll be able to climb on his back and commandeer his club to swing wildly at anything that gets in his way. And once your enemies are gone, you'll have the rare pleasure of tugging his massive eye out in a gushing, close-up finisher.

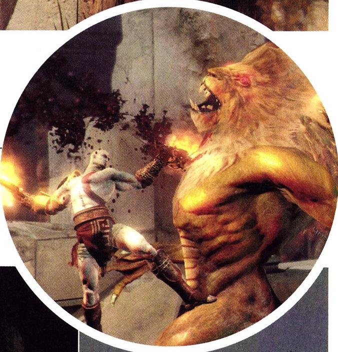


↑ Rip Helios' head off

If you're hungry for *real* gore, it doesn't get much better than the brutal end Kratos has in store for wounded sun-god Helios. Another close-up quick-time event, this particular murder involves Kratos grabbing Helios' face from behind and slowly pulling until the god's neck rips apart and his head comes free. There's a motivation for the violence, too: Helios' lantern-like head becomes another tool in Kratos' arsenal, enabling him to light dark areas, reveal hidden doors, and temporarily blind some enemies.

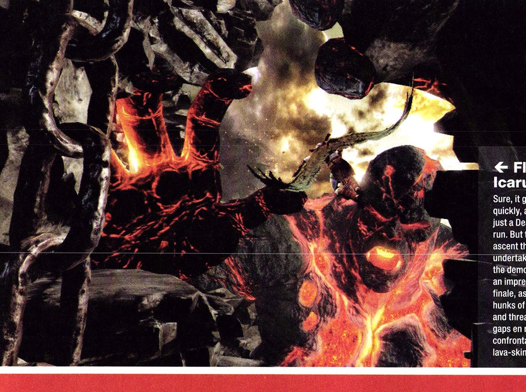
Use the Cestus

While the demo doesn't specifically *tell* you about it until the Chimera fight, you can actually try out Kratos' new weapon, the Cestus—which looks like a couple of oversized lion-head gauntlets—at any time by hitting right on the D-pad. The designers promise Kratos' new weapons will be just as fun to use as his Blades of Athena, and so far they're right; the Cestus can deliver wildly destructive combos that can devastate entire platoons of idiot skeleton warriors in seconds, *and* they enable Kratos to swing around heavy balls on chains.



↑ The Chimera fight

Next up on the Olympian food chain is the Chimera, a beastly, three-faced mini-boss that Kratos fights just moments after the Centaur goes down. The fight unfolds in three stages; in the first, the Chimera attacks on all fours, striking with its snake-headed tail. Once that's hacked off, it rears up and attacks its bipedal, fire-breathing "lion" form, which then gets both its eyes stabbed out. Finally, it drops back down to all fours and charges you with its goat-like head, which ends with Kratos stabbing it in the face with its own broken horn. Not only is it gruesome, but it's also the only enemy in the demo that will actually force you to strategize a little.



← Fly up the Icarus vent

Sure, it goes by pretty quickly, and it's basically just a Death Star trench run. But the high-speed ascent that Kratos undertakes at the end of the demo still makes for an impressive, explosive finale, as Kratos dodges hunks of flaming debris and threads narrow gaps en route to a confrontation with his lava-skinned Titan friend.

Watch the trailer

Of all the things on this list, this is the one you're most likely to miss, as it'll only come up once you've left Kratos glowering idly on the title screen for a while. But it's awesome, and it shows things the demo only hints at. Be sure to watch with the sound cranked up for maximum effect. ■

Bayonetta

Pub: Sega | Dev: Sega/Platinum Games | ETA: January

↖ There's a plot, but it's crazier than a Hideo Kojima bedtime story. Suffice to say Bayo kills weird things in wild ways and looks very cool doing it.

→ Impossible proportions, demonic angels, and gun trumpets...

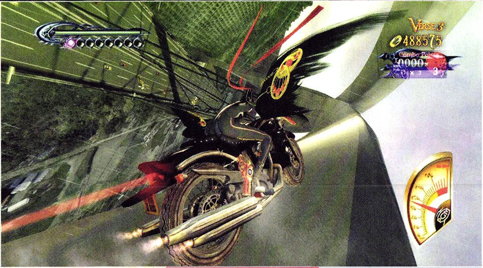
Starring an undead heroine with magic hair and guns in her shoes, *Bayonetta's* bravest trick is throwing out the usual rules on what you can do onscreen in a third-person action game and just presuming that gamers can handle everything going completely and utterly bananas. And, as it turns out, you can. Sit back and watch *Bayonetta* from afar and it's a mess of sound, color, movement, and sexual innuendo, but pick up the controller and it all instantly makes sense.

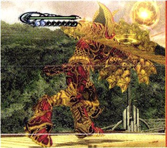
As if to prove a point, *Bayonetta* opens with a fight on the face of a clock tower in total freefall, tumbling on all three axes from a mountaintop so high it touches the very edge of space—and it only gets crazier from there. After you've played a level of *Bayonetta,* everything else seems a little subdued by comparison.

It's a rule-breaker, then, jam-packed with clever tricks that the game pulls once, and only once, before rushing you on to its next great idea. You're fighting flying, bus-sized upturned statues one minute, then speed skating, motorbiking, and running on the ceiling the next. Plus, there are a zillion combos—with just four buttons and an arsenal of weapons, you can get truly creative with Bayonetta's moves and develop a fighting style that's all your own.

Other innovations don't sound like much; a slow-motion mode and a cracking sense of humor, but they're both critical. Evade at exactly the right moment and Bayonetta enters Witch Time—a brief second or two of slow motion that makes your combos even more beautiful. Instead of a dedicated and arbitrary slow-mo button, Witch Time is a reward for absolute precision in a game where you're beset by impossible odds.

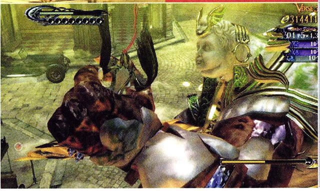
And then there are the laughs. Without its sense of humor, *Bayonetta* would be deadly serious fanboy bait—all teasing titillation and gratuitous sexual excess—but *Bayonetta* is played with tongue firmly in cheek. Every time Bayonetta inexplicably contorts herself into a pole dancer's pose to pick up a gun or sucks on a lollipop while winking at the camera, it's played for laughs, not arousal. Every line of dialogue is performed with irony and every scene is loaded to the brim with genius touches a gamer can't help but love—Magical Sound Shower on the car radio, for instance, or a trumpet that can be fired like a gun. *Bayonetta* is already out in Japan, but publisher Sega delayed the U.S. release until January—that delay might just make *Bayonetta* the best action game of both 2009 *and* 2010. ■





ABOVE It's okay to be disoriented by this shot—you probably don't ride your motorcycle upside-down very often.

BELOW Bosses are both frequent and bizarre. But Bayo's nutty too—her hair is probably about to become a demon dog or something and tear this freak in two.



SEE HOW COMICSBLIPS
BRINGS YOU THE LATEST
INSIDER NEWS AND RUMORS:
WWW.COMICSBLIPS.COM/DEMO

COMICS blips

WWW.COMICSBLIPS.COM

GET ON THE INSIDE

Immerse yourself in the personalities and back-stories behind your favorite characters.

DEEPER COMICS COVERAGE

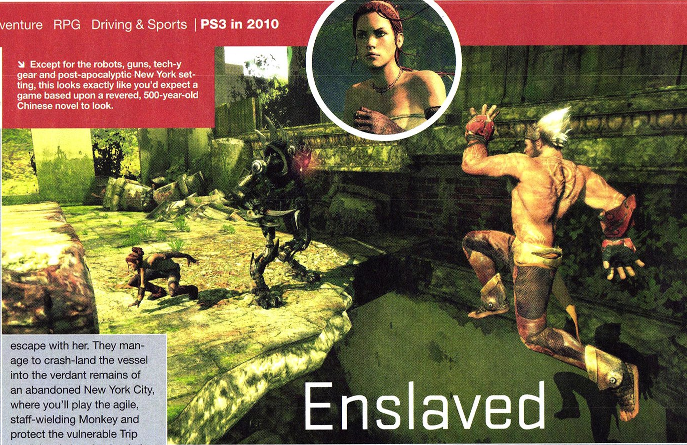
Get one-stop access to the hottest stories from all the best comics sites, large & small.

SHARE, CONNECT, DISCUSS

Expand your knowledge and make friends in a community of comics fanatics like you.

COMICSBLIPS.COM
COMMUNITY-DRIVEN INSIGHTS, NEWS AND RUMORS.

Monkeying around with the apocalypse



Except for the robots, guns, tech-y gear and post-apocalyptic New York setting, this looks exactly like you'd expect a game based upon a revered, 500-year-old Chinese novel to look.

Enslaved

Post-apocalyptic games are everywhere these days. The majority center around dark, chaotic worlds fraught with *Mad Max* mercenaries all fighting for energy, control, or misplaced glory. So what on earth is Ninja Theory, developer of *Heavenly Sword,* doing making a post-apocalyptic game? The answer, dear friends, is blowing in the wind. Or, to be more accurate but less Bob Dylan-like, *buzzing.*

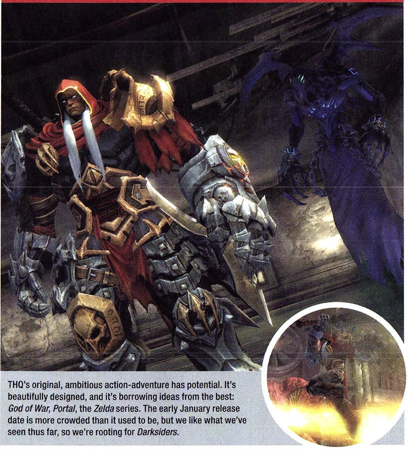
Loosely inspired by themes in the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West, Enslaved* stars a brutish loner called Monkey and a tech-savvy but sheltered woman named Trip, both captives on a monstrous flying slave ship that harvests humans. After seeing Monkey fighting on board, the desperate Trip devises a high-tech headband that "enslaves" Monkey and forces him to escape with her. They manage to crash-land the vessel into the verdant remains of an abandoned New York City, where you'll play the agile, staff-wielding Monkey and protect the vulnerable Trip by viciously beating back the enemy hordes.

Publisher Namco Bandai bills *Enslaved* as a "tactical action-adventure" game, which conjures up visions of slow, turn-based, grid battles. That description is somewhat misleading: *Enslaved* is a full 3D action game comprised of adventure, acrobatic platforming, and combat, but with a *tactical* element.

That brings us to the buzzing in the wind part. In addition to his slave/tech-headband and battle staff, Monkey is equipped with a robotic dragonfly scout that he flings into the wind to scan new landscapes and identify enemies. Once deployed, the flying unit's digital eyes see all mechanical devices and give the duo an understanding of

Darksiders

Pub: THQ | Dev: Vigil Games | ETA: January 5



THQ's original, ambitious action-adventure has potential. It's beautifully designed, and it's borrowing ideas from the best: *God of War, Portal,* the *Zelda* series. The early January release date is more crowded than it used to be, but we like what we've seen thus far, so we're rooting for *Darksiders.*

Dance Dance Revolution

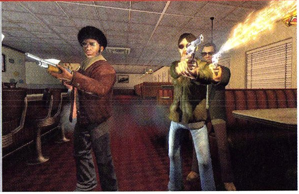
Pub: Konami | Dev: Konami | ETA: February 28

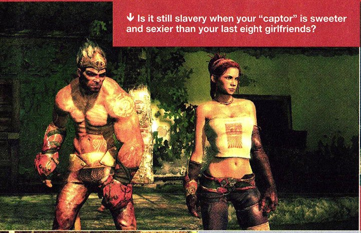
Keeping in step with the times, Konami's latest dance effort boasts variety, options, and customization. You will have access to 150 downloadable songs from past games (15 times its last effort), a fully customizable interface, and an eight-arrow dance mat guaranteed to challenge everyone with two legs.

Heist

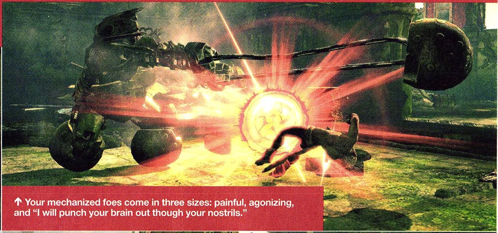
Pub: Codemasters | Dev: inXile Ent. | ETA: June 2010

Set in 1969, this ambitious sandbox game stars a character prepared to trade in peace, love, and understanding for cold, hard cash. The trouble is, *Heist* was first—and last—seen in 2007. But Codemasters has stated it's still coming and Amazon says June, so we're giving them the benefit of the doubt...for now.

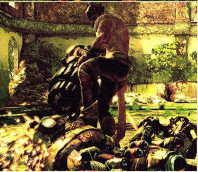


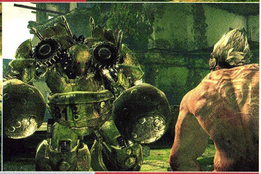


↓ Is it still slavery when your "captor" is sweeter and sexier than your last eight girlfriends?



↑ Your mechanized foes come in three sizes: painful, agonizing, and "I will punch your brain out though your nostrils."





ABOVE Get ready to shred several *Terminator* films' worth of robotic killing machines.

LEFT While using a target's own gun against it is fun, you also have an always-handy, extendable staff.

how to navigate the open, multi-passage environments. Scouting is crucial, because Money and Trip are always outnumbered.

While Monkey's headband prevents him from leaving or harming Trip, he causes plenty of damage to the armies he encounters. When he's not bashing robots of all sizes into smithereens with his retractable high-tech staff, he's countering them with limb-ripping moves, or wielding the enemies' own guns to mow down even more adversaries.

If you love seeing games utilizing all of PS3's technology, *Enslaved,* like *Heavenly Sword* before it, is a stunningly beautiful game—even at this early stage. Awash with a palette of organic greens, concrete off-whites, and bright rusted-metal oranges, this realistic and vibrant apocalypse looks and feels very different than the dull dark brown and black ones you've trudged through before. But that makes sense—this is the first apocalypse you've played through as a Monkey. ■

Transformers

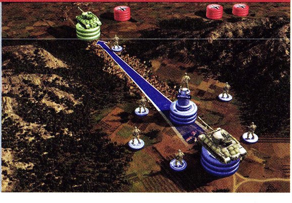
Pub: Activision | Dev: High Moon | ETA: TBD 2010

Because it loves licenses and sequels (a lot), Activision is unofficially working on a *Transformers* game for 2010, sans movie license. Naturally, it's mute on the subject; but we're hoping for better controls and some semblance of a story. This is guaranteed: robots transform into vehicles—and vice versa. Scout's honor!

R.U.S.E.

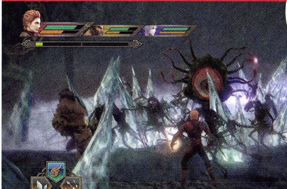
Pub: Ubisoft | Dev: Eugen Systems | ETA: February 2

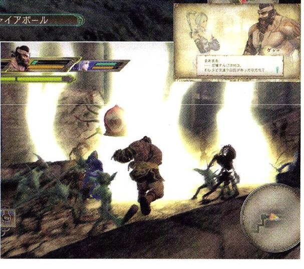
Ubisoft hopes to up the ante on traditional PC strategy war games with sophisticated deception and fake-outs ranging from decoy offensives to camouflaged surprise attacks. Demos show a steep learning curve, but a fluid, impressive interface, and deep rewarding gameplay. Will you RISK it?



Trinity: Souls of Zill O'll

Pub: TBD | Dev: KOEI | ETA: TBD 2010





Question: What happens when you mash *Dynasty Warriors* gameplay into Greek mythology and J.R.R. Tolkien's goblin-filled universe? Answer: A Japanese *Lord of the Rings*...of War? Seriously, this swords and sorcery flavored action RPG is a resurrected PlayStation one series that's likely to touch nostalgic role-playing fans' hearts.

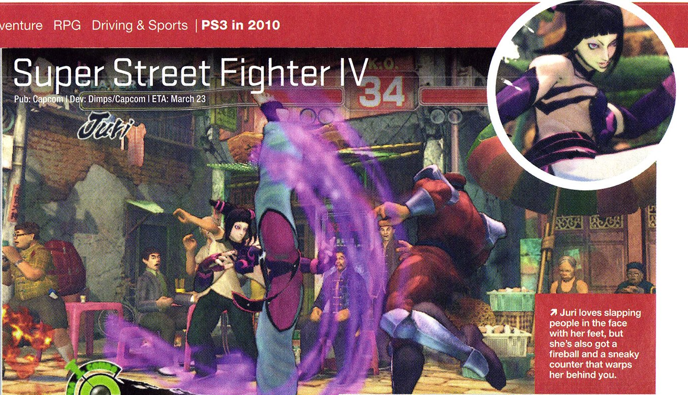
Super Street Fighter IV

Pub: Capcom | Dev: Dimps/Capcom | ETA: March 23

Street Fighter IV is less than a year old, but already publisher Capcom is cranking out an upgrade. The thing is, we're thrilled about it. We're still playing *SF IV* relentlessly because it re-established the *SF* series as the true king of fighters (Sorry *Tekken*, SNK, and everyone else—it's just true), and all the new additions further enhance an already fantastic game.

Team Battle is a new mode in which eight players form two teams of four and take turns going head-to-head. Then there's the Replay channel, which enables you to automatically save matches and watch recorded fights from tournaments around the world—that'll be great for strategy. Endless Battle mode replicates the classic quarters-on-the-glass scenario that arises in real arcades: the winner of each round stays, and the loser is kicked back to the end of the line. Finally, Bonus Stages are back—and kicking the crap out of a sports car with your bare hands or roundhouse-kicking barrels never felt so good.

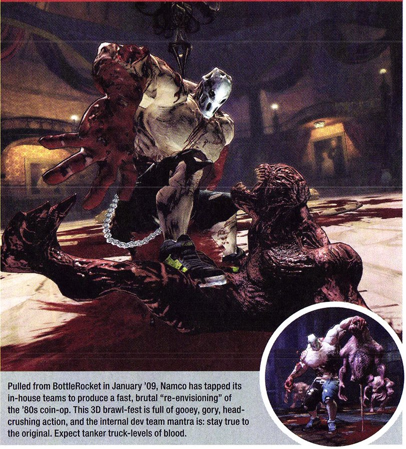
Perhaps most importantly, *Super Street Fighter IV* will add eight or so additional player characters. Notice we didn't say "new"—two of the fighters already revealed are the hulking Native American T. Hawk and the grinning kickboxer DeeJay, both originally from *Super Street Fighter II*. However, there's at least one legitimately brand new contestant: Juri, a sort of assassin-etta. Her attacks are almost entirely kicks, she has a fireball that you can hold and release at the exact moment you choose, and she's got a purple gleam in her eye that we absolutely do not trust one bit. What *do* we trust? That nothing can keep us from diving into this game the instant it arrives in March.



↗ Juri loves slapping people in the face with her feet, but she's also got a fireball and a sneaky counter that warps her behind you.

Splatterhouse

Pub: Namco Bandai | Dev: BottleRocket Ent./Namco Bandai | ETA: TBD 2010

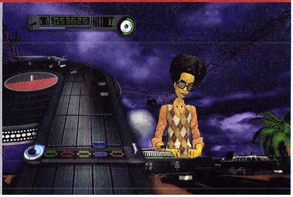


Pulled from BottleRocket in January '09, Namco has tapped its in-house teams to produce a fast, brutal "re-envisioning" of the '80s coin-op. This 3D brawl-fest is full of gooey, gory, head-crushing action, and the internal dev team mantra is: stay true to the original. Expect tanker truck-levels of blood.

Scratch: Ultimate DJ

Pub: Genius Products | Dev: 7 Studios/Commotion Int. | ETA: TBD 2010

Scratch sounded unique when it was first announced—a *Guitar Hero*-style music game that replaced your plastic guitar with a DJ turntable. But *DJ Hero* just slammed onto shelves with a similar, but probably not compatible controller, so *Scratch* is going to have to fight to feel fresh when it arrives.



Iron Man 2

Pub: Sega | Dev: Secret Level | ETA: April

Sega knows it screwed up the first time, so it's tapped comic book writer Matt Fraction to pen an original script for the sequel (and changed its dev team). This time, sporting a new engine, you'll suit up in Mark IV armor, fight Crimson Dynamo, experience a variety of missions, and, hopefully, feel like Iron Man.

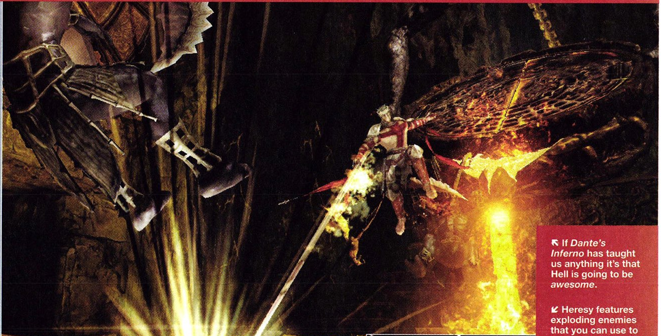
Dante's Inferno

Pub: Electronic Arts
Dev: Visceral Games | ETA: February 9

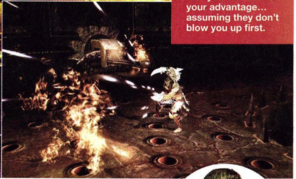
As we descended down a sheer cliff lined with the eternally burning caskets of those who defied God, pausing every now and then to swat bat-demons emerging from the darkness, all we could think was, "Man, this Dante guy does a very convincing Kratos impression." And we mean that as a compliment. Though our hands-on time this round was set in the fiery depths of Heresy, the simple platforming, lever-based room puzzles, and fluid, combo-heavy combat were as delightfully *God of War*-esque as ever.

We did, however, get our first glimpse of the new "righteousness system." At certain points during your romp through the underworld, you'll encounter smaller side-characters mentioned in the actual poem that you can choose to either absolve or condemn. Depending on which option you choose, you'll earn currency to spend on one of two skill trees which roughly correlate with Dante's two main weapons: the divinely empowered cross given to him by his lost love Beatrice and the massive scythe that he stole from Death.

The pathetic, quivering side-characters aren't the only beings that await your judgment, though. You can actually grab any enemy at any time and perform the same soul judging routine in order to more quickly level up and customize your Dante. You will, however, run the risk of being attacked by other enemies during the process, so be sure to exercise caution when harvesting the souls of the damned.



↖ If *Dante's Inferno* has taught us anything it's that Hell is going to be *awesome*.



↙ Heresy features exploding enemies that you can use to your advantage… assuming they don't blow you up first.

Mafia II

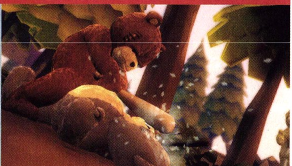
Pub: 2K Games | Dev: 2K Czech | ETA: May 3

Mafia II hopes to stoke the same fire in gamers that the *Grand Theft Auto* series ignites, but with a more historic, "family" oriented twist. It conjures up authentic Mario Puzo-like scenarios filled with rattling Tommy guns, 1950s cars, and genuine characters who love their spaghetti and cigarettes. *Capiche?*

Naughty Bear

Pub: 505 Games | Dev: Artificial Mind and Movement | ETA: Q2

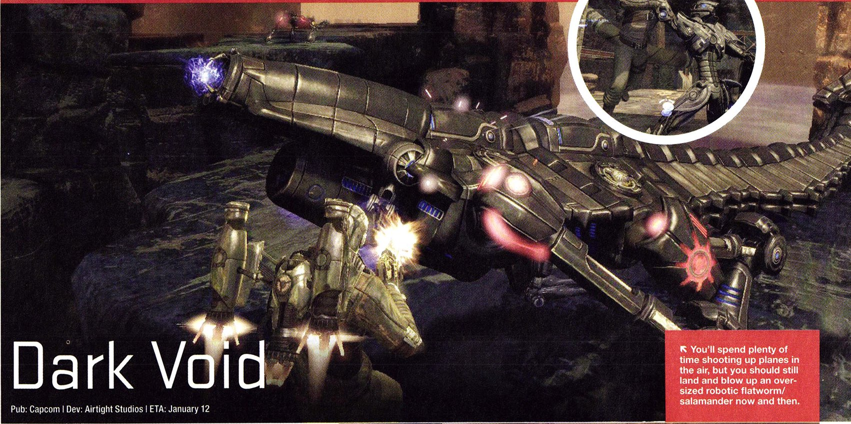
Similar to the concept behind *Fairytale Fights, Naughty Bear* juxtaposes an idyllic playland for kids with the psychopathic actions of a teddy bear fed up with being the island scapegoat. Don't think Bear-Theft-Auto, think Gangsta Bear invades *Sesame Street*—dark, bloody, and hopefully, funny.



Warriors: Legends of Troy

Pub: KOEI | Dev: KOEI Canada | ETA: TBD 2010

Let's say—just for a moment—you're sick of *Dynasty Warriors*. You want an action game with strategy, tactics, Western mythology, and you love slicing limbs and watching blood splatter. Oh, you liked *300?* KOEI Canada hopes to break the *Dynasty Warrior* curse with something altogether new. Well, new-*ish*, at least.



Dark Void

Pub: Capcom | Dev: Airtight Studios | ETA: January 12

↖ You'll spend plenty of time shooting up planes in the air, but you should still land and blow up an oversized robotic flatworm/salamander now and then.

→ Wanna zoom through the skies with a jet pack? Visit the Bermuda Triangle

At first glance, Capcom's soon-to-be-released action-adventure doesn't stand out from the mess of similar games in today's market. The enemy droids look like mindless scrap metal. The Mayan ruins look strangely familiar to the Mayan Ruins in every adventure game we've ever played. And the voice-over work of Nolan North is in dozens games just this year, including *Uncharted 2*. Even the first hour of play is pretty average.

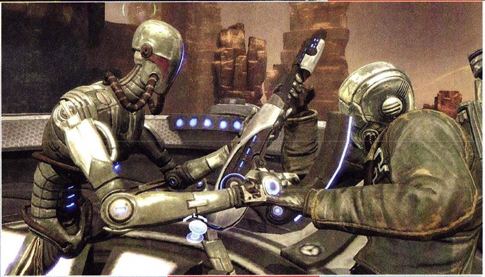
Right around the one-hour mark, however, *Dark Void* hits its sweet spot. It transforms from an ordinary game into a dynamic and challenging and surprising endeavor that works best when all its parts—flying, shooting, and vertical platforming—are in sync.

You star as down-on-his-luck cargo pilot Will, who by happenstance is reunited with his old flame as their plane is caught in a storm in the Bermuda Triangle. The plane crash-lands and flashes them through time and space into the Dark Void. Realizing they're trapped in a jungle, with ruins, and fearsome tribesmen (the cliché trifecta), Will and his cohort happen upon some guns, learn to take cover, kill some robots, and manage themselves in their new hostile home. The camera is still a little stiff and slow, the gunplay is better than decent—but not great—and it's all very by the book.

Then you meet long-lost inventor Nikolai Tesla and you pick up dozens of journals (from famous people like Amelia Earhart), and the puzzle becomes a little clearer: You're lost in a state of limbo, where everyone who's ever disappeared has landed. Tesla outfits Will with guns and a short-jump boost pack, so now you can perform canyon jumps and engage in vertical platform-style combat—a neat take on cover combat that causes vertigo and provides a little spark of excitement. For example, if you need to move up a vertical shaft full of floating platforms, you can hold onto their undersides and use them as cover while shooting enemies above you. It's disorienting at first, but definitely unique.

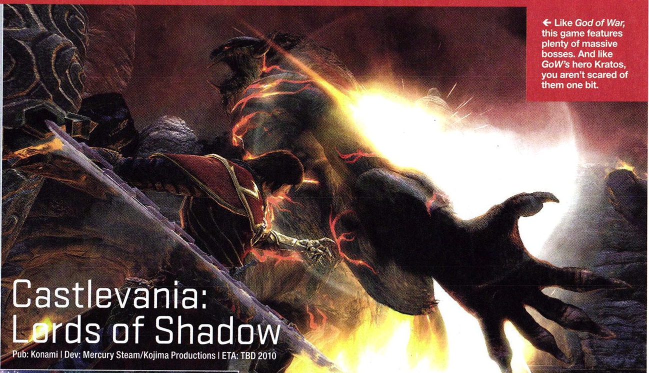
Later, while attempting to repair his plane, Will discovers a device that he learns is an untested rocket pack. This handy little Tesla-made tool is capable of full *Rocketeer*-style flight, not just canyon-jumping boosts. The rocket pack, you learn, is very versatile: it performs loop-de-loops and corkscrews, and it can stall, boost, switch from flight to hover on the fly, and the tips of the double rocket packs are equipped with machine guns. Enter full-blown aerial dogfights. Hell, yeah.

From there on out, *Dark Void* blends vertical, on-foot, and full air combat in a way few games have managed to execute before. For those curious, adventuresome gamers interested in a little bit of everything, keep your eyes on *Dark Void*. ■



ABOVE The fellow on the left is actually your character, Will. He's wearing the helmet because he doesn't want to get bugs in his teeth as he rockets across the skies. Plus, the chicks dig it.

BELOW Nikola Tesla serves as your main supplier of new gadgets and gear.



← Like *God of War*, this game features plenty of massive bosses. And like *GoW's* hero Kratos, you aren't scared of them one bit.

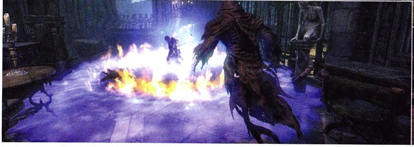
Castlevania: Lords of Shadow

Pub: Konami | Dev: Mercury Steam/Kojima Productions | ETA: TBD 2010

Let's be blunt, here: *Castlevania* is a brilliant 2D action series, but every gamer knows the series has struggled to find its feet in 3D space. That's what has us so intrigued by *Lords of Shadow*—it's the first 3D *Castlevania* since *ever* to look legitimately awesome.

The first thing you'll notice is the production values. Other 3D *Castlevanias* have looked and played okay, but *Lords of Shadow* is completely cutting-edge. The game world is lush and gloomy—you can almost smell the musty decay in some screens—and populated with thick, richly detailed characters and monsters. Then you realize the voice actors are top-shelf talent—names like Patrick Stewart, Natasha McElhone, and Robert Carlyle.

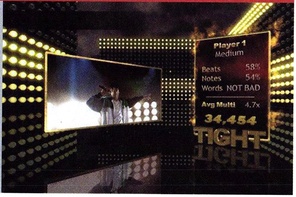
But it's when you get a good look at the gameplay that a PlayStation fan's blood should really start pumping. *Lords of Shadow* seems to be taking as many cues from hit PlayStation games as it does from past *Castlevania* games. Leading man Gabriel looks nothing like Kratos, but his combat moves are a dead ringer—squint a bit when Gabriel is swinging from a gargantuan ogre-looking thing's face by his whip, or carving up a whole crowd of smaller enemies with a whirlwind attack, and you'd swear it was Kratos and his Blades of Chaos. Then there are the boss battle screenshots we received last month, which were clearly inspired by *Shadow of the Colossus*—nice. Finally, Hideo Kojima, the mastermind behind *Metal Gear,* is overseeing the project—if any game can overcome *Castlevania's* 3D curse, it's got to be this one.



Def Jam Rapstar

Pub: TBD | Dev: 4mm Games/Def Jam Interactive | ETA: TBD 2010

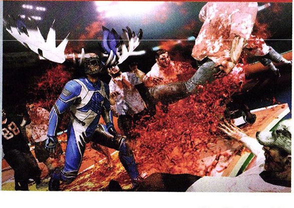
It's hard to describe this game without saying the obvious, "It's *Karaoke Revolution* for wannabe rappers," but there you go. You'll rap, record YouTube-like videos (via PS Eye), and compare scores using online hit charts. This could be a huge success…or totally ignored. The jury's still out.



Dead Rising 2

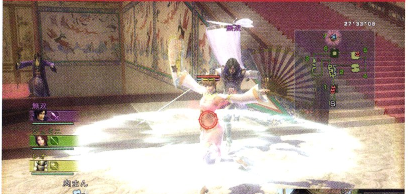
Pub: Capcom | Dev: Dimps/Capcom | ETA: TBD 2010 (possibly August)

How do you make the most outrageous, gore-soaked zombie hacker-upper in history even more outrageous and gory? Capcom thinks it's to make it a game show in which you use weapons such as razor-sharp antlers or motorcycles with handlebar-mounted chainsaws to gib as many undead as possible. Sounds right.



Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce

Pub: KOEI | Dev: Omega Force | ETA: TBD 2010



Originally designed for the PSP, KOEI's console version does the smart thing and goes co-op. Featuring new beast man Meng Huo, dozens of ancient Chinese landscapes and millions of warriors to slay, KOEI connects four people to plow through the single-player campaign or go online. *Musou* attack!

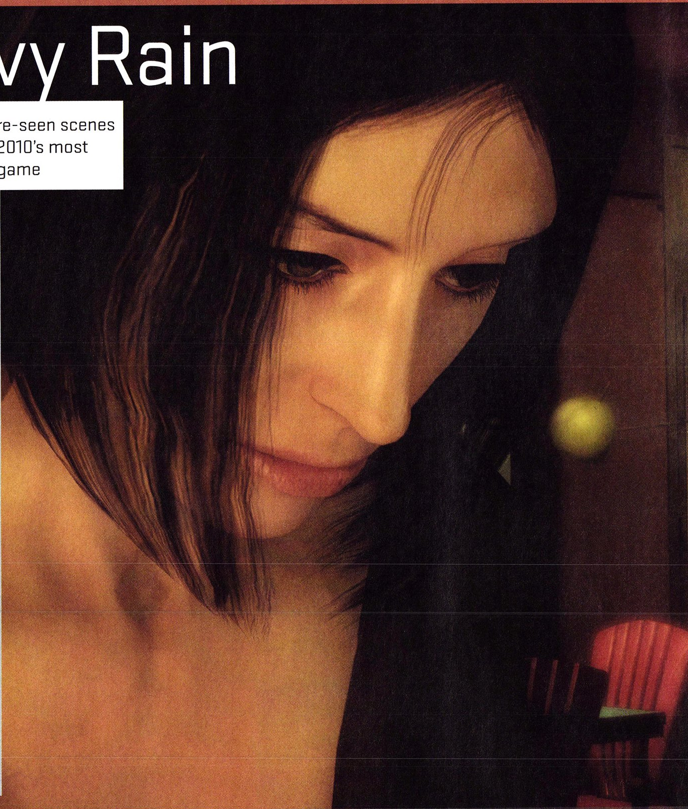
Heavy Rain

→ Three never-before-seen scenes from what could be 2010's most emotionally stirring game

It's raining, just like it has been for weeks, when Scott Shelby walks into a seedy, suspicious-looking residence hotel. Shelby's here tracking down a lead; a private investigator, he's been hired to find Shaun Mars, a little boy kidnapped by a serial killer whose victims' bodies surface four days after they disappear. Working against time, he's come to see one of a handful of people who might know something about this so-called Origami Killer: the mother of an earlier victim.

Asking the desk clerk for "Lauren Winter" gets him nowhere, so Shelby slaps down a five-dollar bill and instantly gets a room number. When he knocks, Winter isn't happy to see him; normally, she says, she only sees clients by appointment. But she lets him in anyway, and begins laying down ground rules before Shelby can explain that he's not here seeking her services as a prostitute. When he does, she's furious. Is he a cop, she demands? Is he looking for a freebie? Telling her he's here to ask about her son doesn't improve her mood.

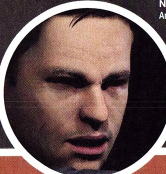
"You can buy my body," she cries, "but my son is *not* for sale!"



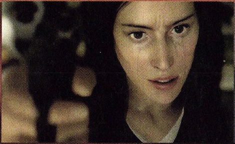
The Investigators →

Four characters will try to track down the Origami Killer, and you'll play as all four as dictated by either the story or their deaths—and, word to the wise, they won't come back once they're dead. Each one also has a serious weakness, which will often strike at the least opportune moment.

Ethan Mars
An architect and family man, Mars' life has fallen apart since the death of one of his sons. His wife has left him, he's been having blackouts and strange visions, and he projects a self-destructive melancholy in every scene he's in. The only thing keeping him going is his other son, Shaun, who disappears early on in the story.



Norman Jayden
An FBI profiler, Jayden is a walking crime lab thanks to ARI, a pair of high-tech glasses that enable him to find and analyze evidence on the spot. He's also addicted to a drug called Triptocaine, which carries devastating withdrawal symptoms.



← Who's that girl?

If you've been following *Heavy Rain* since its announcement, then the newly revealed character, Lauren Winter, will look instantly familiar to you. That's because she's played by actress Aurélie Bancilhon, whom sharp-eyed fans will remember from the 2006 "Casting" trailer that accompanied the game's announcement. The scene from the trailer doesn't appear in the game, but Bancilhon does.

Ordered out of her apartment, Shelby walks down the hall as a tattooed biker-looking dude stomps past him, heading toward Winter's front door. We can already tell this isn't going to end well. Not for either of them.

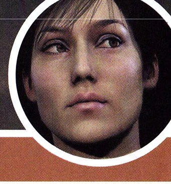
TRAIL OF A KILLER

We're seeing one of three new scenes—previously undisclosed to the gaming press—from *Heavy Rain,* the creepy, moody, possibly revolutionary game that follows four characters on the trail of a serial killer, and whose creators assert will set a new benchmark for emotional storytelling in games. Part of this is because the faces, which are more detailed and expressive than any we've ever seen (yes, even the ones in *Uncharted 2),* are extremely striking in close-up and will exhibit realistic cuts and bruises if they get hurt. Part of it is because you can always see what your character is thinking (see sidebar on page 47), which in turn drives his or her actions.

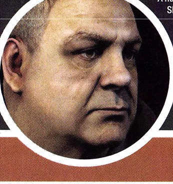
It's also partly because of the control scheme, which is bizarre while being strangely intuitive. When walking around, you actually control your character's head, and then hold a button to walk forward in whatever direction he or she is looking. When you're presented with an action, you'll usually be shown a button, Sixaxis, or right analog stick prompt that loosely reflects the motion you'd go through. To open a car door, for example, you'd push the right stick up (to lift the handle), then curve it around to the left (to open the door). Because of the flashing onscreen prompts for actions (particularly during fight scenes, which require split-second timing), *Heavy Rain* has been described as a long series of quick-time events—which isn't quite right.

For example, just before the biker (whose name is

> "We can already tell this isn't going to end well. Not for either of them."



Madison Paige
We've only seen one scene with the intrepid journalist Paige (though more have been shown in trailers), but her now-infamous strip sequence is arguably the most provocative element the game has revealed thus far. A former war correspondent, she still suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and accompanying nightmares.



Scott Shelby
A huge bear of a private investigator, Shelby is either a rough-and-ready tough guy or a tragi-comic punching bag for criminals, depending on how well you do during his fights. He also has asthma, and when an attack hits, you'll be forced to dig out his inhaler in a hurry.

Troy) stomps through the hall, Shelby suffers an asthma attack—a recurring weakness—and has to go through a quick sequence in which he reaches into his coat, draws out an inhaler and uses it to calm the attack. While it's driven by onscreen prompts, they're all fairly subtle, reflective of the motions they represent and hover over the area they affect.

The same goes for the next few minutes, during which Troy knocks on Winter's door and lets himself in when she answers. In the hallway, Shelby can hear Winter's cries and the sounds of a violent struggle through the thin walls. Shelby decides to intervene, and after Troy answers the door and tells him to mind his own business, Shelby forces his way in and a fight ensues.

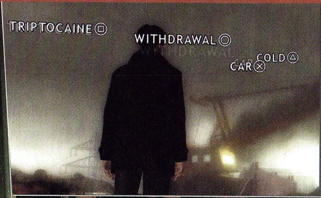
What follows is probably the most brutal, realistic, and *awkward* fight we've ever seen in a game, and it's here that the "quick-time event" criticism goes out the window. This is quick, but it's definitely not canned. You've got multiple on-screen options floating around (Pick up a chair? Charge your enemy?), and limited time to make decisions. Shelby was on the defensive more often than not, as button prompts flashed wildly, usually following the arc of a thrown punch or a broken bottle as it was swung at Shelby's face. (He took a severe beating, too, at one point being slammed face-first through a filthy window.) Eventually, he managed to knock Troy unconscious and left with Winter's thanks, but no new information.

THE RUBBER BAND EFFECT

It didn't have to go like that, of course. Depending on how you play the scene, Shelby could have gotten the information he wanted from Winter right off the bat. He could also have left Troy alone, or gotten his butt

Shades of The Matrix? ↘

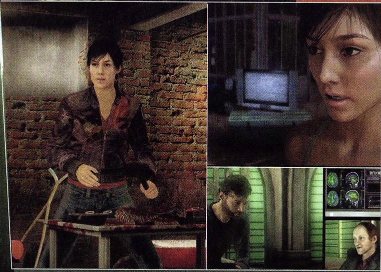
Heavy Rain's sole departure from what's possible in real life (we're told) is ARI (Added Reality Interface), a set of special glasses and a glove that lets FBI profiler Norman Jayden see what normal cops can't. With ARI equipped, you can send out a 10-meter pulse that instantly reveals glowing clues all around you. From floating particulates to bloodstains to footsteps, evidence becomes visible (frequently with floating icons), and you can analyze every piece of it on the spot. It can also be used to manipulate and open any files that Jayden needs to look up or compare against his surroundings. Granted, it won't always be useful—at one crime scene, Jayden found a dead cat that had been around far too long to be involved in the killing—but for tracking the orchid pollen and other clues the Origami Killer leaves behind, it's invaluable.



← What are you thinking?

Holding down L2 will bring up a list of what your character's currently thinking, shown as words floating around your character; and their content and stability will give you an idea as to that person's current emotional state. Is your character depressed? Related words will swirl around him or her. Are they afraid? Watch as the words shake and distort. More importantly, each is tied to a button, and pressing that button will make your character act on that thought. And because you're never completely sure what they're going to do—thoughts can trigger contextual actions, conversations, or just inward musings—the results might often surprise you.

← Gosh, I sure hope nobody breaks in and attacks me as I stand in my undies, unable to sleep and watching the rain instead. That'd suck.



> "We are going to put you in some really mature, emotional situations, and you're going to have to make split-second decisions about what to do."
>
> *– Petro Piasecky, Managing Producer*

kicked during the fight. The choices available in each scene are part of what the game's Managing Producer, Petro Piaseckyj, calls a "rubber band" approach. While the beginning and end of each scene is more or less fixed (assuming you don't die), everything that happens in between is up to you.

The approach was evident in another scene, in which Ethan Mars—the father of a kidnapped boy—speaks with his psychiatrist in a ridiculously swank office with stained-glass windows. As the two men talk, Mars gets up and wanders around the room; while he does, the shrink—whose face is visible in close-up in a secondary, comic book-like panel—follows him with his gaze. A quick look at Mars' thoughts reveals severe depression, and he tells the psychiatrist that he doesn't want to go on living since the death of one of his sons, at which the shrink languidly asks if he thinks he should stick around for the remaining son. Another look at Mars' thoughts, and Petro decides to have Mars confess he's been having recurring blackouts—at which the shrink doesn't seem alarmed. He just tells him they'll talk more at their next session. It's a short scene, and seems insignificant—except that the things Mars tells the psychiatrist might later be repeated to the police. *Dun dun dunnnn!*

MEET THE VICTIM

The third new scene centered on FBI profiler Norman Jayden, who's summoned to a late-night crime scene after a young boy's body is discovered in a field next to some railroad tracks. After flashing his badge to the cops, he moves past the police line, puts on ARI (see sidebar on page 46) and begins investigating. Pulses from ARI uncover footprints—most belonging to the cops—as well as a few traces of orchid pollen and some blood on the tracks.

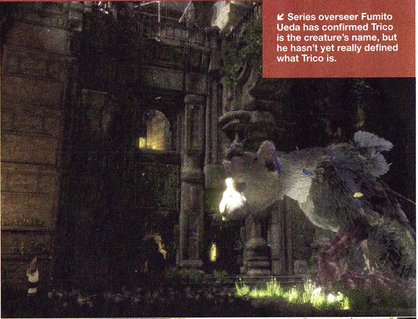
After a cursory investigation, Jayden meets the Captain on duty, who walks him over to the body, kept under a special tent. It's hard to see much through the gloom, but Jayden finds a superficial wound—apparently made postmortem, while moving the body—along with an orchid on the boy's chest and an origami bird in his hand.

It's not one of the more emotional moments in *Heavy Rain*—Jayden is detached and clinical in his examination—but overall, the crime scene offers an excellent example of the sheer amount of detail crammed into an average setting, with its thick, tall grass hiding hundreds of footprints and other clues. As Jayden retraces the killer's steps and prepares to leave the scene, Piaseckyj points out an interesting bit of scenery—a flapping piece of fabric caught on some barbed wire—that serves no other purpose than to illustrate the numerous gameplay possibilities developer Quantic Dream has squeezed into the game.

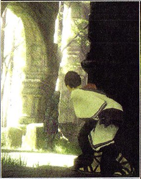
"[Heavy Rain] has a lot of different gameplay mechanics within it," Piaseckyj said, "but ultimately, it's about making emotional decisions... We are going to put you in some really mature, emotional situations, and you're going to have to make split-second decisions about what to do.

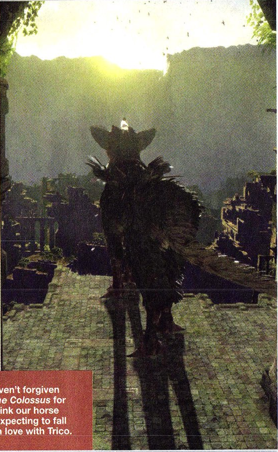
"Or, you can do nothing," Piaseckyj adds. But we just don't view that as an option. ■

↙ The game's Japanese title implies Trico is a "man-eating erne" but all we've seen him eat is barrels.



↙ Series overseer Fumito Ueda has confirmed Trico is the creature's name, but he hasn't yet really defined what Trico is.





↖ We still haven't forgiven *Shadow of the Colossus* for making us think our horse died. We're expecting to fall completely in love with Trico.

The Last Guardian

Publisher: SCEA | Developer: Team Ico | ETA: TBD 2010

→ Have you hugged your pet griffon today?

The most soulful and enigmatic franchise in Sony's arsenal of exclusives is the *Ico* series. It's a mere two games deep thus far, with 2001's *Ico* starting the series off and the prequel (or so everyone thinks, at least) *Shadow of the Colossus* arriving in 2005. However, those two games are beloved cult hits—landmark games to those who've played them—thanks to heart-stroking stories and a melancholy, beautiful, atmospheric world. That history is why we're practically quaking with anticipation for *The Last Guardian,* the third game in the series and the first to appear on PlayStation 3.

You play as young boy, whose name isn't yet known (typical of the series, actually) and who appears to be in considerable trouble—video footage shows him running as if for his life and desperately trying to escape some very elaborately armored soldiers. He can leap chasms, shimmy along ledges, climb chains, and creep by on tiptoe. And if evasion doesn't work, he can wriggle out of a soldier's grasp or use objects in the world to save himself—for instance, one scene shows him throwing a barrel at a soldier, who then slips down the stairs and crashes into a scaffold, which collapses and buries him in an avalanche of barrels and debris.

Then again, you may just want to call your pet Trico, an "erne"—that's apparently what zoologists now call a crazy giant, horned cat-thing with feathers, bird feet, and stunted wings. Trico accompanies you through the game and serves not only as a companion—though one who, as an animal, doesn't always do what he's told—but as a protector and a pretty kickin' ATV. You can use him as a living ladder, scrambling up his back and onto his head to reach higher ledges, you can have him carry you across long jumps, and you can use him as a submarine, swimming swiftly underwater with you clinging onto his hackles for dear life. He also eats barrels, or at least their contents. We're hoping there are no litter box moments.

It's not exactly clear when in the series' timeline *The Last Guardian* takes place Internet speculators have guessed that it could be a pre-prequel—the facts that the boy lacks horns and the land is populated instead of desolate seem to place it before *Shadow of the Colossus,* and it's easy to imagine Trico—who *does* have horns—as the predecessor of the colossi. Whether that proves true or not, *The Last Guardian* is nonetheless looking like a singularly magical experience, and one that only PS3 can deliver. ■

PlayStation®

The Official Magazine

Your #1 source for PlayStation

PlayStation 3 · PlayStation Portable · PlayStation Network · PlayStation 2

PlayStation®

JUNE 09

The Official Magazine

ARKHAM ASYLUM

"you're in the real world now and the lunatics have taken over the asylum."

SAVE 79%

Every month *PlayStation: The Official Magazine* delivers:

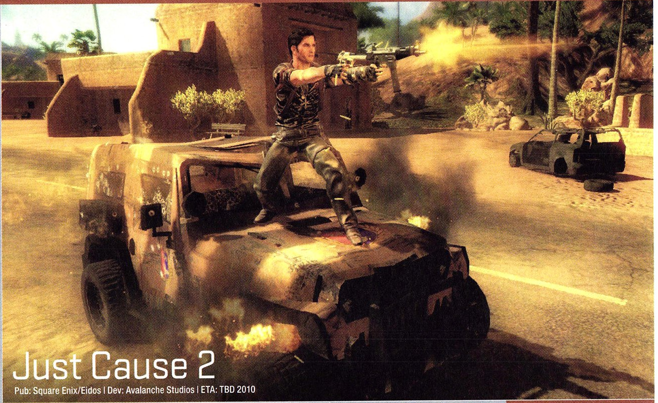
- First look previews of the biggest games
- Interviews with the senior executives and game designers shaping the future of PlayStation
- Very latest news on downloads and games available on the PlayStation Network

Reserve Your Issue Today!

www.playstationthemagazine.com

Just Cause 2

Pub: Square Enix/Eidos | Dev: Avalanche Studios | ETA: TBD 2010



This open-world, third-person mayhem simulator is what would happen if the team who made *Grand Theft Auto* drank a truckload of tequila and said, "Know what? Screw gritty realism. Wouldn't it be fun if you could skydive off the wing of a fighter plane?" You're special agent Rico Rodriguez, you've got 1,000-square kilometers of Southeast Asian island filled with vehicles to hijack and bad guys to shoot, and you have three things in your favor: a Batman-like grappling hook/zip line, an unlimited use parachute, and absolutely no regard for phrases like "that's not actually possible."

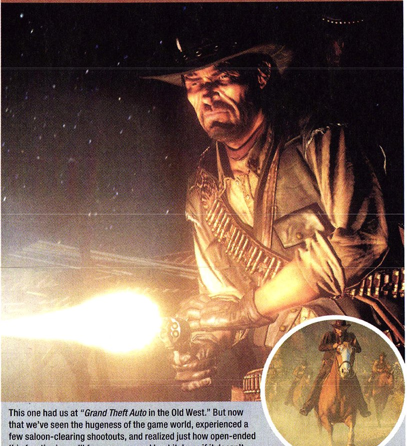
It's all about mobility. Your grappling hook and parachutes give you a superhuman ability to catapult yourself around the environment, like Spider-Man with a jet pack. Want to get somewhere fast? Grapple the ground, leap and deploy your parachute, then reel in the hook, launching yourself forward. Or just grapple that low-flying attack helicopter, zip up, and hijack it. Or, you could grapple a speeding car and then deploy your parachute, which will vault you immediately into the air, where you can then grapple and hijack a fighter plane. Or you can just ride around on its wing. Whatever's cooler to you.

The grappling gun even makes your considerable arsenal of weapons almost unnecessary, because both ends can be launched, essentially attaching two things with a giant bungee cord. Is an enemy sniper pinning you down? Grapple him, then attach the other end of the bungee to a passing jeep and wave bye-bye. Is there a whole pack of bad guys? Grapple one, and then hit a fuel-filled barrel with the other end—it'll be yanked violently toward the soon-to-be-explosively-dispersed crowd. Or, you could bungee a tank to the bottom of an attacking helicopter and watch the resulting pile-up take out the whole crowd as you zip-line to safety atop a nearby tower. It's a never-ending series of beautiful disasters.

↖ In addition to the hook and chute, Rico has balance that would make a bull rider cry. You can surf any vehicle in the game.

Red Dead Redemption

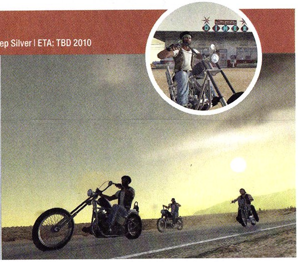
Pub: Rockstar Games | Dev: Rockstar San Diego | ETA: TBD 2010



This one had us at "*Grand Theft Auto* in the Old West." But now that we've seen the hugeness of the game world, experienced a few saloon-clearing shootouts, and realized just how open-ended this frontier is, we'll form a posse and hunt it down if it doesn't arrive soon.

Ride to Hell

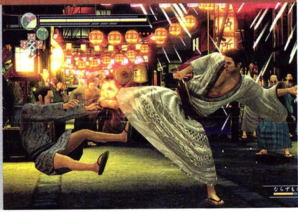
Pub: Deep Silver | Dev: Deep Silver | ETA: TBD 2010



We first heard about this sandbox-style, '60s-era biker gang game in 2008, and we'll be damned if we know much more about it now. We do know that there *will* be motorcycles, and that said motorcycles will be driven on roads.

Yakuza 3

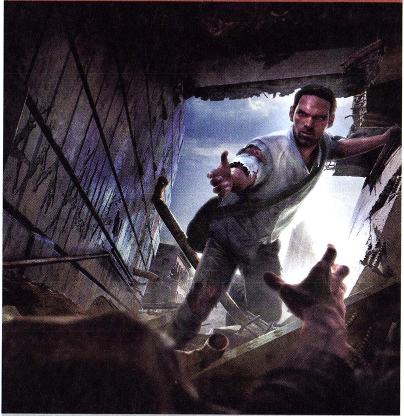
Pub: Sega | Dev: Amusement Vision | ETA: TBD 2010



Already out and selling like gangbusters in Japan, it looks like *Yakuza's* next installment might be released in North America (despite early reports to the contrary). The question is, will we Westerners be able to put down our hamburgers and lassos long enough to care? If you're a true gamer, the answer will be "yes."

I Am Alive

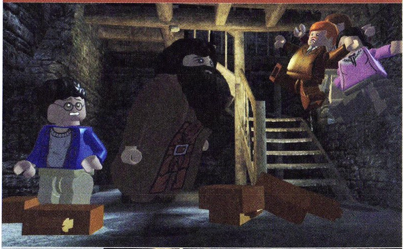
Pub: Ubisoft | Dev: Ubisoft Shanghai | ETA: TBD 2010



This mysteriously titled survival adventure begins right before a catastrophic earthquake. You then have to survive the resulting shattered cityscape, in which water is more valuable than gold, people have gone all *Lord of the Flies,* and every step could bring a skyscraper crashing down around your head. Yes, you're alive. The question is, can you *stay* that way?

LEGO Harry Potter

Pub: Electronic Arts/Warner Bros. Int. Ent. | Dev: Traveller's Tales | ETA: TBD 2010

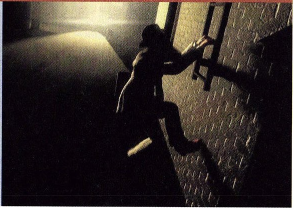


Yeah, the gag of remaking classic movies with goofy LEGO bricks isn't really funny anymore, but considering the recent movies, we think the *Harry Potter* universe could really benefit from losing some of its irritating adolescent angst. Don't you? Plus, we really want to see what a LEGO version of Alan Rickman's Professor Snape looks like.

LA Noire

Pub: Rockstar Games | Dev: Team Bondi | ETA: TBD 2010

We'll see if Sony can keep it from slipping over to Microsoft, but in the meantime, we'll be drooling over Team Bondi and Rockstar's slick '40s-era detective tale. It looks gritty, stylish, and above all, *classy.* Any game can feature guns and cars. It takes a special game to do it Sam Spade-style.



EyePet

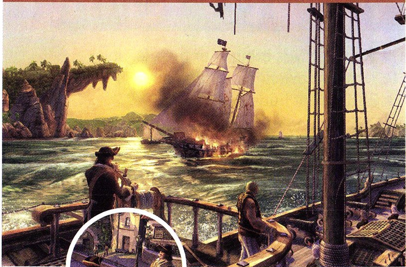
Pub: SCEA | Dev: SCE London Studio | ETA: April

EyePet isn't really a game—it's more like a super next-gen *Tamagotchi.* You can bet it'll showcase some pretty amazing new technology, though—stuff that will make all those Project Natal fanboys a bit jealous perhaps? And yeah—even if you're tough, you'll fall in love with the sugar-sweet little fleabag.

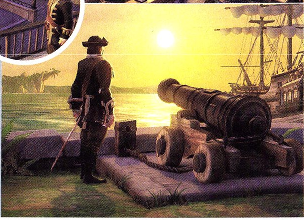
EyePet™
Clothing
Select

Pirates of the Caribbean: Armada of the Damned

Pub: Disney Interactive Studios | Dev: Propaganda Games | ETA: TBD 2010



Despite the fact that Disney has announced a fourth *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie, this game takes place before the events of the films, and is shaping up to be a fine open-world adventure. Sounds good, but will Captain Jack make an appearance?

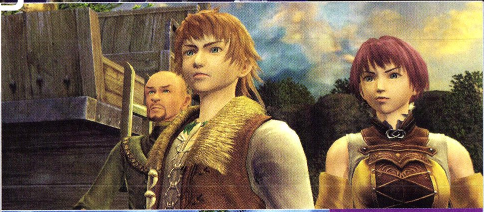


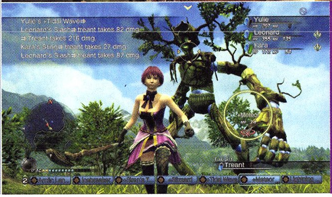
White Knight Chronicles

→ Build a town, bring your friends, and turn into a towering armored badass in 2010's first huge RPG

Our perception of *White Knight Chronicles* has changed a lot since the first time we saw it; from the earliest trailers, it looked like a traditional (but exceptionally pretty) Japanese RPG, with a main character who could transform into a stupendously tall, robot-looking knight. Since its Japanese release a year ago, however, we now know it's a strange JRPG and quasi-MMO hybrid (like *Phantasy Star Online* or *Borderlands),* with a player-created avatar who tags along with the archetypal JRPG heroes in the single-player campaign, but who can also tackle short, unlockable multiplayer quests online with up to three other players.

What we didn't know until our most recent crack at the game was just how much bigger the U.S. release is going to be than the RPG that hit Japanese stores at the end of 2008. For starters, our version will feature exclusive extras, like online voice chat and dynamic, voice-acted ambient conversations among townsfolk. It'll also include some big features that are being introduced

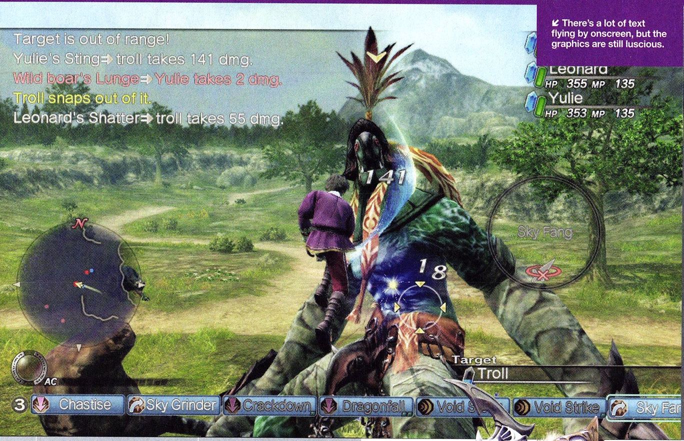




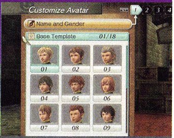
Yulie's +Tidal Wave⇒
Leonard's Slash⇒ treant takes 82 dmg.
⇒ Treant takes 216 dmg.
Kara's Sting⇒ treant takes 27 dmg.
Leonard's Slash⇒ treant takes 87 dmg.

↑ One of these men can become a two-story knight with interestingly shaped groin armor. The other is bald. Which do you think has the best shot with Miss Sexy Female here?

← This Ent-like creature may look imposing, but we're thinking he might be a tad vulnerable to a book of matches.


Target is out of range!
Yulie's Sting⇒ troll takes 141 dmg.
Wild boar's Lunge⇒ Yulie takes 2 dmg.
Troll snaps out of it.
Leonard's Shatter⇒ troll takes 55 dmg.

↙ There's a lot of text flying by onscreen, but the graphics are still luscious.



Get your look together

Character customization in RPGs is nothing new, but *White Knight Chronicles* is the only JRPG we've seen that offers a sports-game level of control over custom avatar character creation. Adjusting your shape, selecting a gender, and choosing your starter head and hairstyle are just the basics. From there, you can minutely alter everything from the slope of your avatar's cheekbones to the placement of moles to the default goofy expression he or she wears. So you're free to churn out an androgynous young hero, a weird-looking old lady, or a total anime princess if that's what you want. Just remember: your avatar will be the face online players know you by, so adjust with caution.

in Japan as downloadable content, but will come as part of the standard package for U.S. gamers. Oh, and you can build your own town.

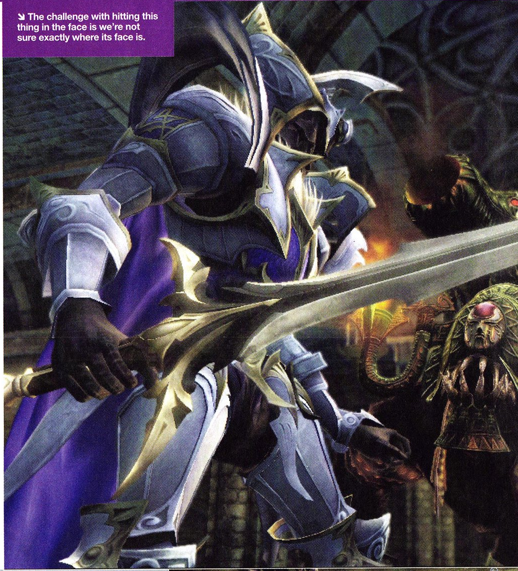
First, though, the story: if you haven't been following it until now, you'll probably want to know that *White Knight Chronicles* focuses on Leonard, a young wine-shop worker who lives in the kingdom of Balandor. At the beginning of the game, he and the new guy at the wine shop—your avatar—are ordered by their boss to deliver a wine shipment to the castle for Princess Cisna's debut celebration. Unsurprisingly, everything goes to hell when bad guys show up and attempt to kidnap the princess while the party's in full swing. Swept up in the incident, Leonard discovers he's a "Pactmaker," which is a surprisingly tame way of saying he's able to transform into the super-sized White Knight, who's capable of stomping most anything smaller than himself. Naturally, your avatar ends up as Leonard's sidekick, and what follows is a whole lot of exploration, monster killing, and recruitment of new characters. You know, the usual stuff.

EXPLORE, CONQUER, AND BECOME A TWO-STORY BADASS

On or offline, the action remains largely the same—traipse across impressively vast, lushly rendered expanses of countryside, caves, and dungeons in two-to-four-person parties, hack to death whatever monsters you find and take their loot. The combat smacks of an MMO, with players issuing timed commands to their characters instead of just whaling on things directly, and as it turns out, it's a lot more fun than it looks.

You'll be able to switch instantly between Leonard and your avatar (or any other on-screen hero) to target wandering enemies for destruction from a distance. (A lot of the smaller enemies seem fairly harmless; apparently, low-level baddies are

"Leonard discovers he's able to transform into the towering White Knight, who's capable of stomping most anything smaller than himself."



➘ The challenge with hitting this thing in the face is we're not sure exactly where its face is.

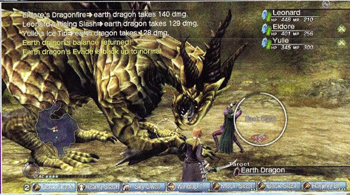
a lot less eager to attack you if you're significantly stronger than they are.) Commands to your teammates can be issued with L3 for ordering the entire party to fall back or focus on a single enemy, or R3 which orders individual teammates around.

In a slightly unusual move, each character has a certain number of skill slots, to which attacks, spells, and items can be assigned. These slots can then be accessed rapidly during battle from a little horizontal menu, enabling you to chain together actions in a hurry as your characters perform them on autopilot. The more your characters use certain weapons, the more moves they'll learn for each, with about 50 available for each weapon type.

As a time saving way to eliminate the short wait between actions, it's also possible to create combo chains of up to seven commands and assign them to a single slot. However, because each command eats up a certain number of Action Chips—points built up during the course of battles that are spent on attacks and other actions—using combos will eat through your AC total a little more quickly.

When things get *really* tough—as they will whenever dragons, giants, or any of the other surprisingly common creatures that tower over everything else show up—you can turn Leonard into the gleaming-and-GIGANTIC White Knight, able to chain together devastating attacks that can make short work of even the biggest monsters.

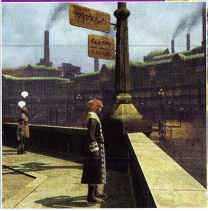
In order to transform, though, you'll have to have saved up a certain number of ACs, and the more ACs you have when you transform, the more commands will be available to you as the White Knight.

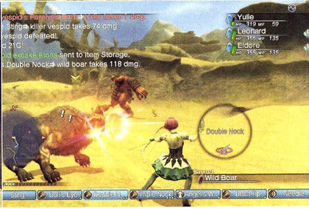


Eldore's Dragonfire⇛earth dragon takes 140 dmg.
Leonard's Rising Slash⇛earth dragon takes 129 dmg.
Yulie's Ice Tip⇛earth dragon takes 128 dmg.
Earth dragon's balance returned!
Earth dragon's Evade is back up to normal.

Leonard
HP 448 MP 210
Eldore
HP 401 MP 256
Yulie
HP 345 MP 300
Back Slash
Target
Earth Dragon
AC
Back Slash
Rising Slash
Sky Swat
Windup T...
Moon Slash
Back Slash
Raging Bl...

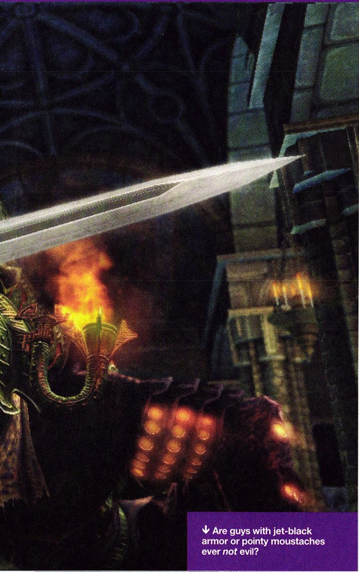
➔ Sure, go ahead—take on an Earth Dragon without transforming into a 20-foot-tall armored wrecking machine. Great strategy, Napoleon.





vespid's Paralysis Barb⇛Yulie takes 1 dmg.
s Sting⇛killer vespid takes 74 dmg.
vespid defeated!
d 21G!
pid exoskeletons sent to Item Storage.
s Double Nock⇛wild boar takes 118 dmg.

Yulie
HP 319 MP 59
Leonard
HP 355 MP 135
Eldore
HP 355 MP 135
Double Nock
Target
Wild Boar
Sting
Bull's Eye
Double N...
Triple Nock
Angel's W...
Blast Tip
Needle



↓ Are guys with jet-black armor or pointy moustaches ever *not* evil?

> "A whopping 50 multiplayer quests will be available on day one, with more available later as DLC."

CITY BUILDING, JRPG-STYLE

The biggest addition to the game since its Japanese release actually happens off the battlefield: it's the Georama system, a holdover from earlier games by developer Level-5 (such as *Dark Cloud*). Here, you're given a plot of land, and are then given free reign to build a little town on it as you see fit. You can base it around farming, weaponsmithing, or other crafts, or you can just create a picturesque village with cafes, houses, and shops.

It's all very *Sims*-like, with players able to buy or earn everything from buildings, trees, fields, and gardens to random bits of scenery and fencing, which can all be rotated 360-degrees and plunked down anywhere inside your plot's borders. The only caveat is the amount of stuff you can cram in is limited, but until you hit the cap, you're free to go nuts.

The editable area in your plot of land will also grow as you boost your Georama ranking, which can be done by meeting certain requirements. To get to level two, for example, you need to fork over 2,000 gilder (the game's currency), reaching level three means you'll have to place a weapon shop somewhere within your village, and so on. Eventually, it'll go from a patch the size of a small farm to a full-fledged town, with multiple, connected plots (ideally) filled with homes, businesses, and wandering residents, who will continually drop hints about what they'd like to see you create. Take their advice, and they'll be happier—and more productive.

These residents can be recruited straight out of the single-player campaign, and any NPC with a yellow name floating above their head is a viable candidate. Once they've relocated, you'll be able to take or buy any food, items, or weapons they create whenever you visit your Georama. It's even possible to convince a weapon-combining frog creature (who will be instantly recognizable to fans of *Rogue Galaxy)* to set up shop on your land, where it can meld together your old weapons to create something new and potentially more powerful or valuable.

BRING YOUR FRIENDS

Aside from giving you a cool home base from which to farm items, your Georama acts as a lobby for multiplayer games, which creates a little bit of pressure to make it as big and well-developed as possible before you invite people over. Your visitors will also be able to buy items from your Georama before accompanying you on multiplayer quests, which bring up to four players together (recruitable from 12-player lobbies, if you don't have a group of friends ready to go) and are designed to take about an hour to complete. The quests also contain rare items that you're guaranteed to never find in a single-player game.

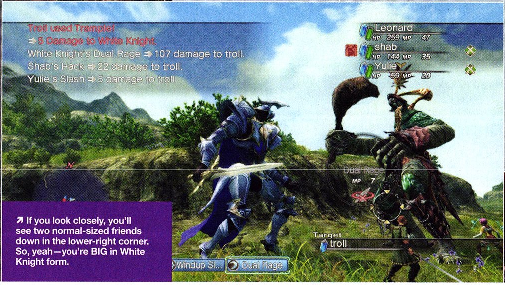
A whopping 50 multiplayer quests will be available on day one, with more available later as DLC, and these can be unlocked as you make your way through the single-player campaign (although there's no effect on the single-player experience). If you're the type to factor run time into an RPG's value, that shoots the game up from 25 to 40 hours for the single-player campaign, to 75 to 90 hours with all the multiplayer quests included.

The combination of online play with what appears to be a massive single-player campaign, as well as the potential rewards of messing around with Georama plots, and *White Knight Chronicles* is shaping up to be a serious time-sink when it hits this spring. So long as the sum is as impressive as the parts, the year-plus wait since *WKC's* Japanese release will be well worth it. ■

Add a Friend

Get connected

Just when you thought you already belonged to too many social-networking services, along comes *White Knight Chronicles'* GeoNet. A proprietary, in-game messaging system, it enables players to assemble in-game friend lists, send each other text messages, and basically do everything else that PSN already does. But it can also be used to update an in-game blog, and once you've acquired the Crystal Camera item, you'll be able to take in-game photos to post to it. It'll also enable you to see who's visited your pages, trace them back to their own pages, and maybe make new friends.



Troll used Trample!
⇒ 5 Damage to White Knight.
White Knight's Dual Rage ⇒ 107 damage to troll.
Shab's Hack ⇒ 22 damage to troll.
Yulie's Slash ⇒ 5 damage to troll.

↗ If you look closely, you'll see two normal-sized friends down in the lower-right corner. So, yeah—you're BIG in White Knight form.

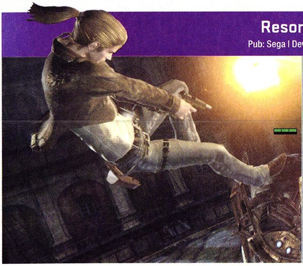
Final Fantasy XIII

Pub: Square Enix | Dev: Square Enix | ETA: March 9

↖ One of the most anticipated RPGs of 2010, *Final Fantasy XIII* takes players to a new world where creatures that live inside crystals wage war on the city of Cocoon with a handful of exiled resistance fighters. The Active Time Battle system returns with some minor tweaks, alongside stellar graphics and lush art design.

Resonance of Fate

Pub: Sega | Dev: tri-Ace | ETA: TBD 2010



Led by veteran JRPG designer Takayuki Suguro, this first-time team-up between tri-Ace and Sega is filled with potential. The new story is eco-friendly and employs a semi real-time battle system. *Resonance* could be just what old-school PlayStation fans have been waiting for.

Alpha Protocol

Pub: Sega | Dev: Obsidian Ent. | ETA: Spring

Join CIA Agent Michael Thorton on the run from the government he serves. The Dialogue Stance system lets you play it cool like James Bond, rough like Jason Bourne, or somewhere in between like Jack Bauer. Whichever "stance" you choose has an impact on the story that unfolds.

Magic The Gathering: Tactics

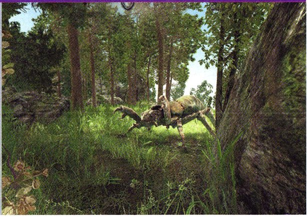
Pub: Sony Online Ent. | Dev: Wizards of the Coast | ETA: TBD 2010

Like card games? Good. Turn-based tactical games based on card games? Excellent! Wizards of the Coast is bringing their classic card game and all its collectable monsters and spells to the PS3 in turn-based tactics form so you can get your geek on like never before.

Arcania: A Gothic Tale

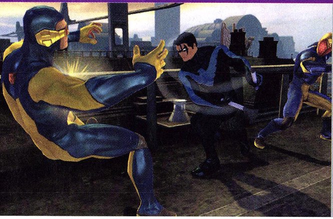
Pub: DreamCatcher | Dev: Spellbound Ent. | ETA: TBD 2010

The fourth installment of the *Gothic* series gets a mini-makeover with vibrant colors, variable climates, and a name change. The combat features a stamina bar that's tied to the action combat. Players can also tweak their characters by assigning attributes across different classic RPG classes.



DC Universe Online

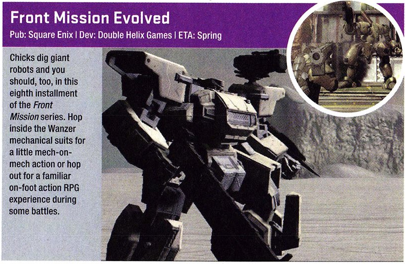
Pub: Sony Online Ent. | Dev: SOE Austin | ETA: TBD 2010



Jump into the realm of DC Comics with this licensed superhero MMO. Players can choose to take up either with Justice League or Legion of Doom in a battle of good and evil that spans several DC Comic environments like Gotham City or Metropolis. Expect to see a lot of fan-favorite DC characters.

Front Mission Evolved

Pub: Square Enix | Dev: Double Helix Games | ETA: Spring



Chicks dig giant robots and you should, too, in this eighth installment of the *Front Mission* series. Hop inside the Wanzer mechanical suits for a little mech-on-mech action or hop out for a familiar on-foot action RPG experience during some battles.

Star Ocean: The Last Hope International

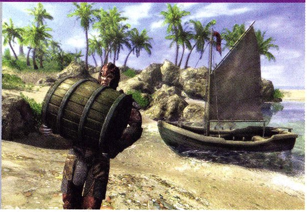
Pub: Square Enix | Dev: tri-Ace | ETA: February 4

Finally...Aeos. And I'm gonna be the first to take that "one small step" onto the surface.

The high-flying space opera prequel lands on PS3 after a successful sweep on Xbox 360. The real-time battle system adopts a new feature called Battle Exalted Action Type that lets you customize your characters' fighting styles. Bonus: the PS3 version includes both English and Japanese voice tracks.

Two Worlds II

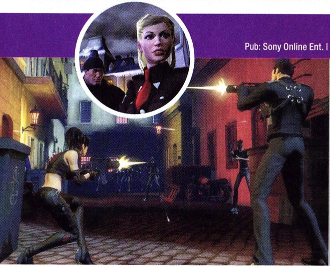
Pub: TopWare Int. | Dev: Reality Pump | ETA: TBD 2010



Two Worlds II features totally overhauled graphics, gameplay, and writing to improve on the fantasy realm laid down in the first game. The story picks up almost immediately where its predecessor left off and takes the player to new locations in previously undiscovered lands of Eastern Antaloor.

The Agency

Pub: Sony Online Ent. | Dev: SOE | ETA: TBD 2010



It's spy versus spy versus many other spies in this espionage-themed MMO. The world is divided into two spy agencies that determine what types of mission players receive; either stealth or action. The streamlined interface makes the whole game look more like an action game than an MMO.

Final Fantasy XIV

Pub: Sony Computer Ent. | Dev: Square Enix | ETA: TBD 2010

The *Final Fantasy* series goes massively multiplayer once again with an all-new world and advancement system based around four classes and four city-states. The game features cross-platform play so PS3 owners can join up with PC players to take on the brave new MMO world.

Atelier Rorona: Alchemist of Arland

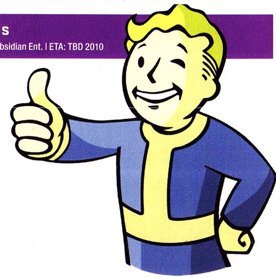
Pub: NIS America | Dev: Gust | ETA: TBD 2010

リオネラ
87/ 87
ロロナ
64/ 64
クーデリア
57/ 57

Rorona marks the first time the 11-game-long *Atelier* series graces the PS3. Despite the updated 3D graphics and fancy visual style, the game stays true to the series' roots by focusing on item synthesis and telling the game's story through a visual novel system. You want a traditional Japanese RPG? Here's your game.

Fallout New Vegas

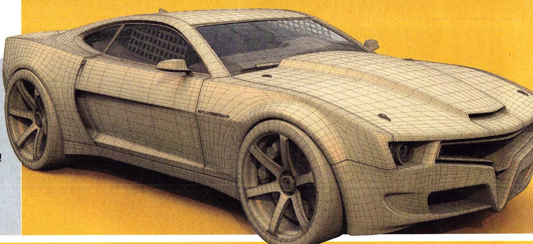
Pub: Bethesda Softworks | Dev: Obsidian Ent. | ETA: TBD 2010



Return to the desolate world of *Fallout 3* with an all-new spinoff game developed by Obsidian Entertainment, which was founded by some of the mad geniuses behind *Fallout* and *Fallout 2*. Expect more of the same role-playing action instead of a regression toward old-school tactical RPG elements.

Split/Second

→ How do you spell high-speed racing fun? E.X.P.L.O.S.I.O.N.S.



We're about one minute into *Split/Second's* newly revealed Downtown course, when we jerk the wheel right to avoid an exploding building. We accelerate blindly through the smoke and debris of another blast, and spot two opponents on our tail. Timing it just right, we trigger a "Powerplay," setting off another explosion behind us. The massive detonation hurls their cars into the air, fragmenting them into countless shards of metal and glass. "Holy &^%t! That was cool!" We blurt out, almost reflexively. Sure, our car was just totaled, but that was fun. *Really* fun.

An arcade-style racing game designed to deliver enormous course-altering blasts, Black Rock Studio's upcoming *Split/Second* aims to be the racing game that Hollywood's Michael Bay *(Transformers, Bad Boys, Armageddon)* would make—big, bold, and *explosive.* "From a production point of view, we have never done anything like this before," says Nick Baynes, game director at Black Rock Studio (makers of last year's excellent off-road racer *Pure).* He then adds, "To be honest, I don't think *anyone* has made anything like this before."

And gamers are watching—*Split/Second,* which garnered "Best Racing Game of Show" at this year's E3, isn't just highly anticipated. In many ways, it's unprecedented.

MARIO KART MEETS DEATH RACE 2000

Vaguely similar to the premise of *Death Race 2000, Split/Second* puts you on a race-themed TV show in which eight drivers pilot souped-up muscle cars at eye-melting speeds. What's different is that the drivers can increase their chances of winning by strategically triggering Powerplays—that's a fancy, made-up word that means "setting off very large bombs." Interestingly, the game isn't about murdering people in horrifically bloody ways (nor is it about dropping bananas like in Nintendo's famous kart series). Rather, it's about detonating the environment at the right time to alter the track and outfox your opponents. Yes, the *environment* is your power-up.

Powerplays come in three flavors: simple, sneaky, and cataclysmic. First (and cheapest, energy-wise), there's your small, basic detonation which just slows you (or an opponent) down, causes minor damage and alters your path without killing you. Then there are the sneaky Powerplays, which create shortcuts. For instance, in the Docks level you can trigger a crane

8TH
2479053
L1/3
SPLIT SECOND
6
10
2
df
20
4
TOW

↙ Developer Black Rock also crafted the excellent all-terrain racer *Pure.* If you haven't played it, you definitely should.

Dynamic AI

Almost every racing game has issues with opponent AI. Black Rock uses a sophisticated networking tool that constantly reads data from every person's dev kit in the office and outputs it to filters that measure the locations of crashes, Powerplays, and the most action, etc. Principle designer Serkon Hassan analyzes the data to create the most dynamic AI possible. "In essence, what you'll have is a system that can adapt to each player so that you can have an extended life well past the first season."

↖ The cars are all fictional, but they're heavily influenced by muscle cars like Camaros, Mustangs, and Chargers.

to collapse, which blocks off a section of road (thereby slowing down opponents ahead of you) and opens up another route for you to take, saving you time. Then there is the grandaddy of them all, the fully charged Powerplay. Setting one of these off will topple entire skyscrapers, crumple bridges like tin cans, and crash-land jumbo jets, all of which slam onto the course, permanently altering it—and if you're unlucky, potentially crushing you in the process.

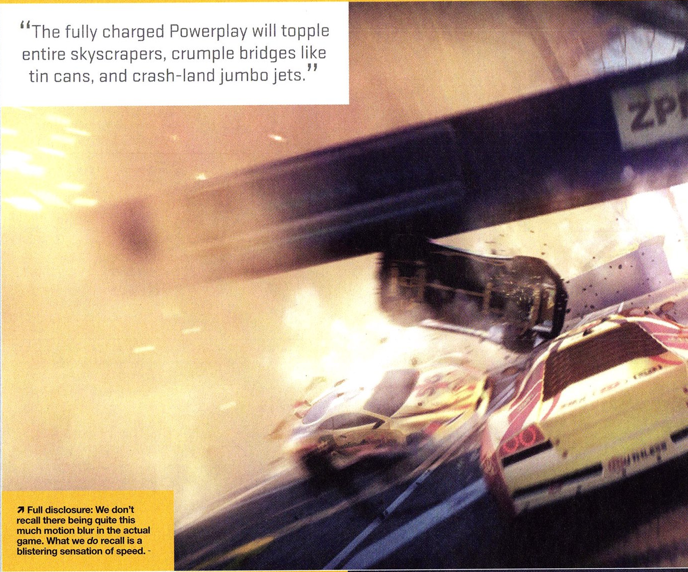
Despite each racetrack's destructive complexity, playing *Split/Second* is actually very simple. Racing from one of two perspectives (behind-the-car or bumper cam), you accelerate with R2, brake with L2, and fill your Powerplay gauge by drifting through turns, drafting behind opponents, getting air from jumps, and pulling off "near-misses" (i.e. getting as close to an explosion as possible without taking damage). Setting off a Powerplay merely requires the press of a single face button.

In another move toward simplicity, Black Rock has eliminated the standard HUD seen in every racing game—you know, the one you never see because it's in the corner of the screen and you don't want to take your eyes off the road—and smartly replaced it with a lap (1-3) and position (1-8) display between the rear brake lights. There is no speedometer—rarely do arcade games provide speedometers (because they're not trying to simulate real speed anyway). There is no rear-view mirror, though there is a rear-look button—which can be used to trigger a Powerplay on opponents behind you if you get good enough with it. It's essentially a double punishment for those already choking on your exhaust fumes.

ARCADE LINEAGE

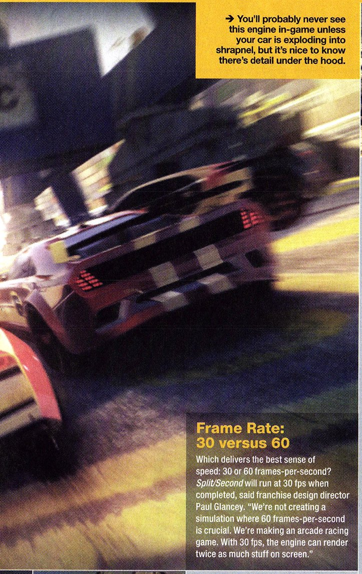
All of this may sound "been there, done that" to any veteran of arcade racing games; after all, on PlayStation 2, Criterion's popular *Burnout* focused on fantastic crashes. The surprise hit *Flatout* was all about physics-based damage. And Atari's *Stuntman* dared racers to complete trap-laden Hollywood stunt courses. But *Split/Second* is bigger and more ambitious, creating Hollywood set-pieces and utilizing the environment to change the dynamic in a racing game on a whole new scale. "The original idea for *Split/Second* came about three-fourths of the way through the PS2's life-cycle," explained Baynes. "We saw games like *Burnout* and *Flatout*, and we felt the one area in arcade racing games that hadn't been touched was the environment."

> "The fully charged Powerplay will topple entire skyscrapers, crumple bridges like tin cans, and crash-land jumbo jets."



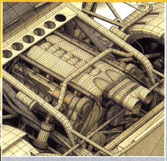
↗ Full disclosure: We don't recall there being quite this much motion blur in the actual game. What we *do* recall is a blistering sensation of speed.

↘ Lots of racing games have tried destruction, but none have tied it into the gameplay this cleverly—or this bombastically.



Frame Rate: 30 versus 60

Which delivers the best sense of speed: 30 or 60 frames-per-second? *Split/Second* will run at 30 fps when completed, said franchise design director Paul Glancey. "We're not creating a simulation where 60 frames-per-second is crucial. We're making an arcade racing game. With 30 fps, the engine can render twice as much stuff on screen."



→ You'll probably never see this engine in-game unless your car is exploding into shrapnel, but it's nice to know there's detail under the hood.

To shape a racing game based on changing, explosive environments, Black Rock looked at older, now classic arcade games like Sega's *Outrun* and *Daytona USA,* and Namco's *Ridge Racer,* but Baynes explains it was equally influenced by games outside the racing genre.

"It's funny to say this, but games like *Half-Life 2* and *CoD 4: Modern Warfare* have influenced us as much as *Ridge Racer* and *Daytona USA,*" said Baynes. "*Modern Warfare* provided such a great experience; it sucked you in emotionally. And even though it's a bit old now, *Half-Life 2* brought buildings down in a way where you could see the physics of the buildings as they collapsed. The drifting from Sega's *Outrun,* the damage from *Burnout,* the emotional experience of *Modern Warfare*—they were all definitely things that were in our psyche during the initial concept phase for *Split/Second.*"

RACE, IGNITE, EXPLODE

In addition to the Downtown course, Black Rock revealed new play modes and the game's progression scheme. *Split/Second* is built around a robust single-player campaign called "Season" and a multiplayer mode that includes a two-player splitscreen option and eight-person online play. (Before you scoff at the two-player, know that PTOM gets a ton of letters from players who still cherish splitscreen modes.) Season mode consists of 24 episodes, in which each episode will comprise different racing events. Throughout Season, you'll experience every single kind of game mode, including the never-before-seen Nemesis mode, which we sampled during our visit to Black Rock's Brighton, England studio.

Nemesis plays like the *Terminator 2: Judgment Day's* wild riverbed chase scene. Remember the motorcycles, the 18-wheeler, and the endlessly persistent T-1000 Terminator driving the truck? Obviously, *Split/Second's* version doesn't star a shape-shifting cyborg assassin, but the game idea is essentially "survival" with cars. You start behind a truck that's dropping explosives and oil-filled barrels, and your goal is to avoid them and pass the truck. You must stay alive as long as possible, earn extra time, and achieve the top score. The course we saw also took place in a concrete riverbed. It's a hairy, competitive affair.

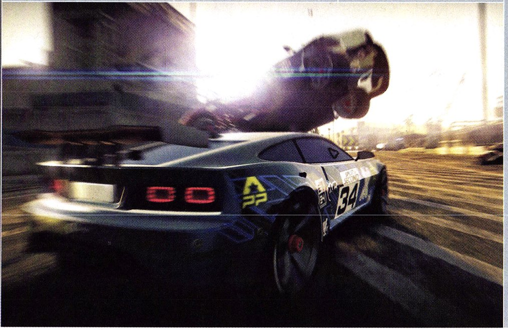
There's also the aptly named "Quick Race." In this mode, you can select any race type—individual courses from Season, Nemesis, online multiplayer, two-player splitscreen, etc. Not only will race types break up any possible repetition, but each course also offers different set-pieces and diverse ways to expend your energy. For instance, by saving up power and triggering your Powerplay at the right moment during the airport course, you'll bring a 747 aircraft crashing down onto the track. If you do the same in the Downtown course, you'll trigger the collapse of a two-kilometer span of bridge—the biggest single animation in the game.

Given the level of destruction in each race, the three vehicle classes (super cars, muscle cars, and trucks) are all unlicensed, American-influenced, and meaty in design. As you progress, newer, better cars are unlocked. Lead vehicle artist Paul Philpot demonstrated how dozens of panels fly off vehicles, including a chassis that splits into three parts when hit by big enough blasts. "This game is all about destruction, and because we don't have any car licenses, we can do whatever we like with them," he said. "Our cars can literally be torn into pieces."

Seemingly every aspect of *Split/Second* centers around its explosions: Whether it's the vehicle reacting to blast effects, the graphics engine rendering volumetric smoke that actually casts shadows on buildings and cars, or the layered sound packets consisting of ricocheting bullets, lion roars, and jet engines. Black Rock's efforts are ambitious, but its long tradition in racing games and its laser-focus should make *Split/Second's* spring debut even more explosive than the game's detonations. ■

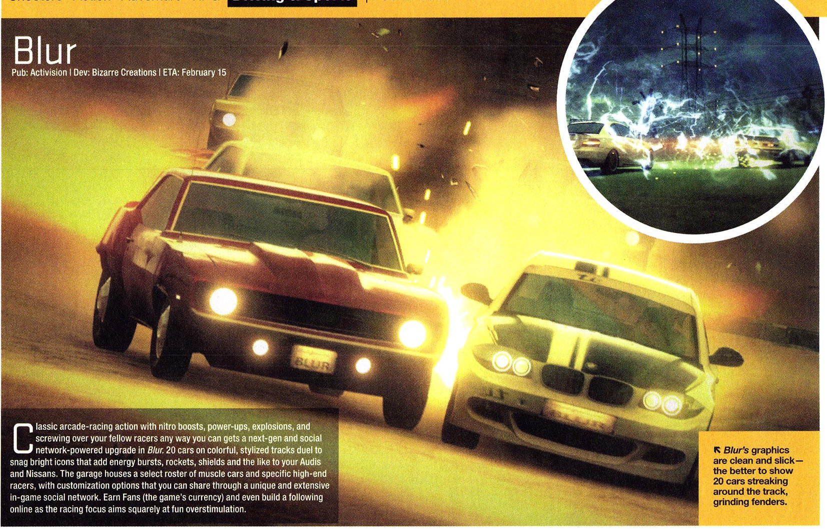
Sonic Boom

Audio director Steve Rockett is pushing the limits with sound effects. Instead of using a traditional "cross-fade" sound model like most racing developers, he employs a "playback" model. This model captures a larger range of engine frequencies, which can be split out into thousands of little chunks. The result is a fuller, richer, and more responsive engine sound. Rockett also utilizes a sound harmonizer, which he uses to overlap, for instance, the sound of a Corvette Stingray and a Ferrari, to create a totally new engine sound. For explosions, he says, "We've been using afterburners, jet engines, big grinding axle sounds, lion roars, whatever it takes to make it sound right. They subconsciously create that fear factor, which is really important in Hollywood movies."



Blur

Pub: Activision | Dev: Bizarre Creations | ETA: February 15

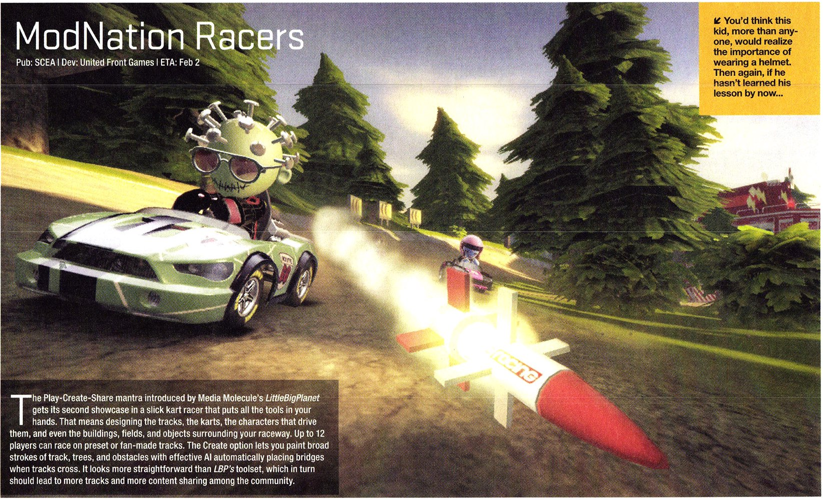


Classic arcade-racing action with nitro boosts, power-ups, explosions, and screwing over your fellow racers any way you can gets a next-gen and social network-powered upgrade in *Blur*. 20 cars on colorful, stylized tracks duel to snag bright icons that add energy bursts, rockets, shields and the like to your Audis and Nissans. The garage houses a select roster of muscle cars and specific high-end racers, with customization options that you can share through a unique and extensive in-game social network. Earn Fans (the game's currency) and even build a following online as the racing focus aims squarely at fun overstimulation.

↖ *Blur's* graphics are clean and slick—the better to show 20 cars streaking around the track, grinding fenders.

ModNation Racers

Pub: SCEA | Dev: United Front Games | ETA: Feb 2



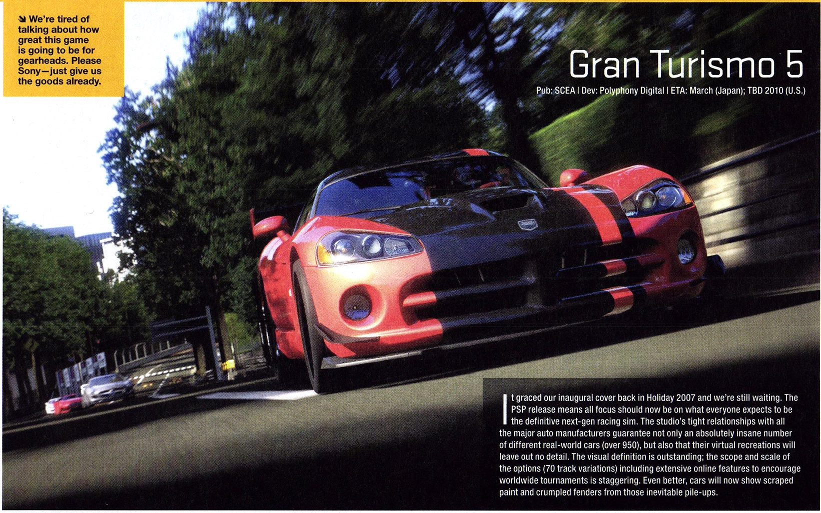
↙ You'd think this kid, more than anyone, would realize the importance of wearing a helmet. Then again, if he hasn't learned his lesson by now...

The Play-Create-Share mantra introduced by Media Molecule's *LittleBigPlanet* gets its second showcase in a slick kart racer that puts all the tools in your hands. That means designing the tracks, the karts, the characters that drive them, and even the buildings, fields, and objects surrounding your raceway. Up to 12 players can race on preset or fan-made tracks. The Create option lets you paint broad strokes of track, trees, and obstacles with effective AI automatically placing bridges when tracks cross. It looks more straightforward than *LBP's* toolset, which in turn should lead to more tracks and more content sharing among the community.

We're tired of talking about how great this game is going to be for gearheads. Please Sony—just give us the goods already.

Gran Turismo 5

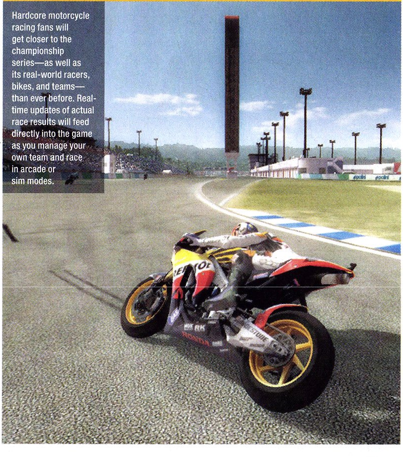
Pub: SCEA | Dev: Polyphony Digital | ETA: March (Japan); TBD 2010 (U.S.)



It graced our inaugural cover back in Holiday 2007 and we're still waiting. The PSP release means all focus should now be on what everyone expects to be the definitive next-gen racing sim. The studio's tight relationships with all the major auto manufacturers guarantee not only an absolutely insane number of different real-world cars (over 950), but also that their virtual recreations will leave out no detail. The visual definition is outstanding; the scope and scale of the options (70 track variations) including extensive online features to encourage worldwide tournaments is staggering. Even better, cars will now show scraped paint and crumpled fenders from those inevitable pile-ups.

Moto GP 09/10

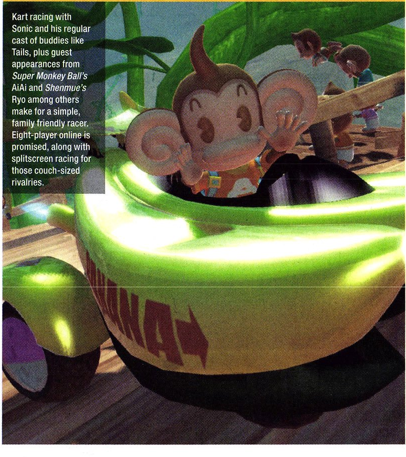
Pub: Capcom | Dev: Monumental Games | ETA: March



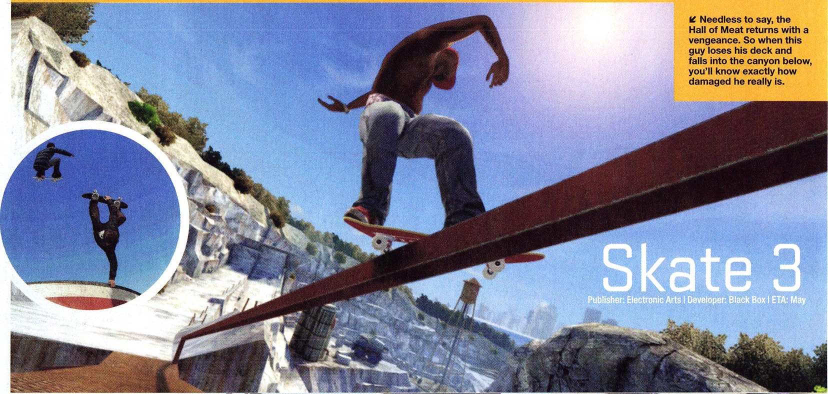
Hardcore motorcycle racing fans will get closer to the championship series—as well as its real-world racers, bikes, and teams—than ever before. Real-time updates of actual race results will feed directly into the game as you manage your own team and race in arcade or sim modes.

Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing

Pub: Sega | Dev: Sega | ETA: February 23



Kart racing with Sonic and his regular cast of buddies like Tails, plus guest appearances from *Super Monkey Ball's* AiAi and *Shenmue's* Ryo among others make for a simple, family friendly racer. Eight-player online is promised, along with splitscreen racing for those couch-sized rivalries.



↙ Needless to say, the Hall of Meat returns with a vengeance. So when this guy loses his deck and falls into the canyon below, you'll know exactly how damaged he really is.

Skate 3

Publisher: Electronic Arts | Developer: Black Box | ETA: May

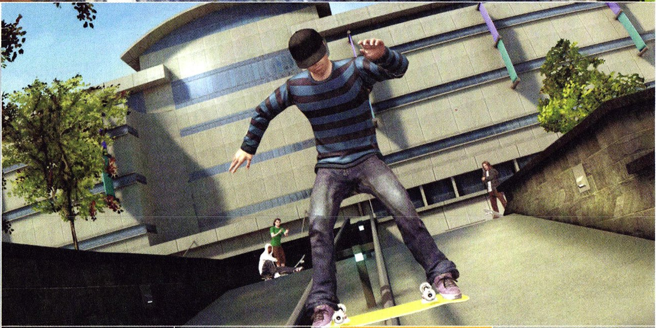
→ Hit the deck!

Yeah, that's right, *Skate 3*. Hard to believe we're already on the third game, right? Just two years ago, *Tony Hawk* had a veritable stranglehold on the genre, and now the *Skate* franchise is not only a smashing success but an annual release as well (almost). So what's new this time around? Well, there's a handful of new tricks, of course—most notably dark slides. And you'll be able to own spots in an all-new city: Port Carverton, which actively celebrates the skating lifestyle rather than capping rails and hiring rent-a-cops.

But the big change this time around is the overall goal and the means by which you achieve it. Rather than skating merely for personal glory, you'll be able to build your own skate brand: you can design board graphics, shoot video clips, and even build your own skateparks, then share them with the online community and receive in-game rewards every time someone downloads your content.

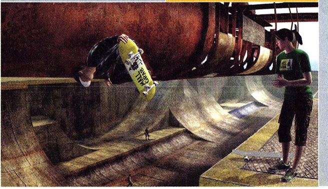
Better still, recruit your real-life friends to create the ultimate skate team and earn rewards by dominating the competition in both unique offline challenges and intense online competitions. Practically everything you accomplish in the game will strengthen your brand and help you sell decks…all while skating with your friends.

We recently had a chance to step back on the *Skate* deck and session Port Carverton in a big ol' multiplayer demo, which of course gave us a chance to check out the new team-oriented versions of the classic multiplayer game modes. In no particular order, we tested Dominate, a timed free-skate battle to claim objects with high scores; One Up, a turn-based score competition (think team S-K-A-T-E); Own the Lot, a mini-tournament in which the system randomly selects three of nine events; and of course, Death Race.



↑ As your brand grows, you'll start to see it pop up around the city: kids riding your decks, shops sporting your goods, and more.

↓ Port Carverton offers three distinct districts: the university, downtown, and the industrial district, seen here.



Needless to say, the events were a blast. Not so much because *Skate* desperately needed co-op but because the mechanics on which the series was founded remain largely the same: flick the Left-analog stick to perform grinds and flip tricks, hold L2 or R2 for grabs...you know how it goes. And if you don't, no worries: the "Skate. School" training mode and adjustable controls should make you a pro in no time. Frankly, we were tempted to just skate off into the city. But for those of you who hunger for competition, rest assured, *Skate 3* will deliver.

EA Sports MMA

Pub: EA Sports | **Dev:** EA Tiburon | **ETA:** TBD 2010

EA takes on THQ's current darling of the mixed martial arts space, TapouT, by going full bore with a broad roster of popular names from the sport. Can it look as good as *Fight Night?* Will UFC relent on being "at war" with EA? We'll know when the bell rings.

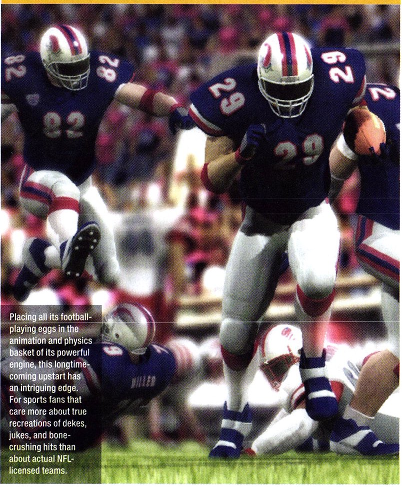
Vancouver 2010

Pub: Sega | **Dev:** Eurocom | **ETA:** January

Skiing, skating, and jumping are part of this 14-event winter Olympic package. Eschewing the usual button-mangling, thumb-bruising controls of yore, this game cashes in on the quick-time event craze to add a layer of timing and skill to your quest for the gold.

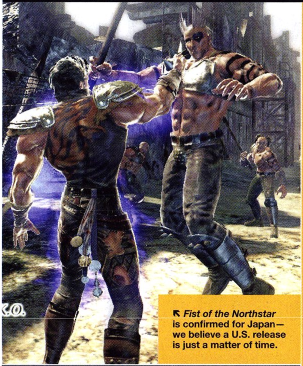
Backbreaker

Pub: 505 Games | **Dev:** Natural Motion | **ETA:** TBD 2010



Placing all its football-playing eggs in the animation and physics basket of its powerful engine, this longtime-coming upstart has an intriguing edge. For sports fans that care more about true recreations of dekes, jukes, and bone-crushing hits than about actual NFL-licensed teams.

The hits just keep on coming...



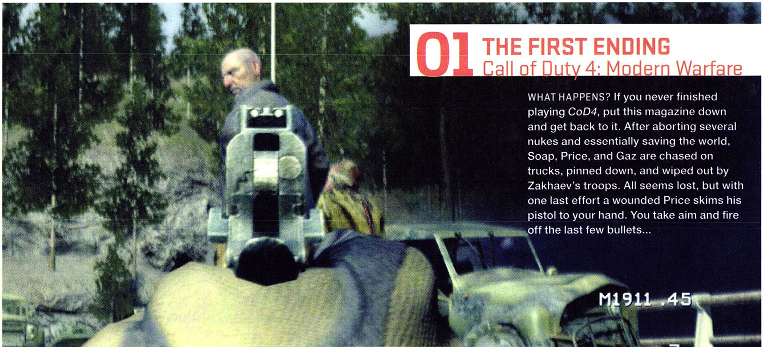
↖ *Fist of the Northstar* is confirmed for Japan—we believe a U.S. release is just a matter of time.

Is that *every* PS3 game you'll be playing in 2010? Believe it or not, no. New games are announced every week, and that's not to mention those that are still under the radar. For example, here's a list of even more games that we believe are coming in 2010, but can't speak freely about at press time. Some are still only rumors, some have been hinted at in developer blogs and other slip-ups but not officially announced, and some definitely exist, but we're still waiting for confirmation of a PS3 version or a North American release date. But we honestly expect to see at least 90-percent of these revealed for PS3 in the near future. E3 2010 should be *very* interesting.

- Dead Space 2
- Mirror's Edge 2
- Warhammer 40000: Space Marines
- Deus Ex 3
- Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11
- Madden NFL 11
- NCAA Football 11
- Next Tomb Raider
- FIFA 11
- Call of Duty 7
- Hitman 5
- Ghost Recon 4
- The Darkness 2
- New Spider-Man
- Killzone 3
- Resistance 3
- Star Wars Battlefront PS3
- The Agent
- Hydrophobia
- Edge of Twilight
- The Outsider
- Under Siege
- Final Fantasy Versus XIII
- Last Rebellion
- Steambot Chronicles 2
- MLB 10
- MLB 2K10
- Road Rash reboot
- Twisted Metal PS3
- TimeSplitters 4
- Beyond Good & Evil 2
- Metro 2033
- Clash of the Titans
- 3D Dot Game Heroes

The 20 Greatest Moments from the Call of Duty series

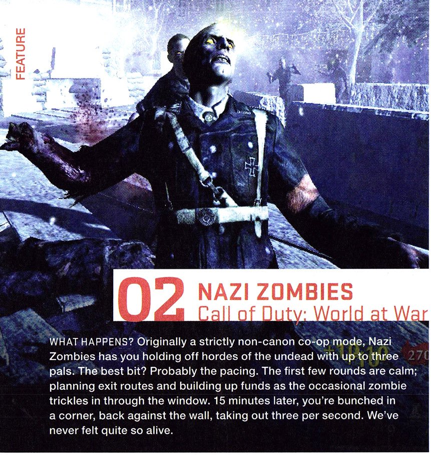
From a subtle homage to Hollywood to a genre-twisting death scene, here are the scenes we'll remember for the rest of our gaming lives



01 THE FIRST ENDING

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

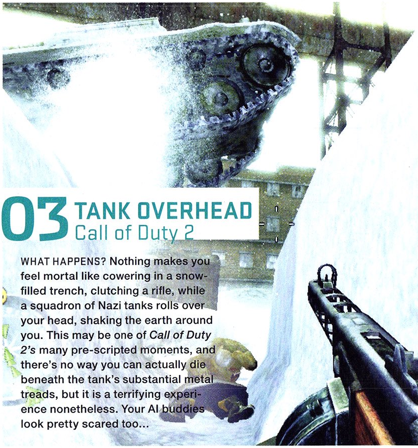
WHAT HAPPENS? If you never finished playing *CoD4*, put this magazine down and get back to it. After aborting several nukes and essentially saving the world, Soap, Price, and Gaz are chased on trucks, pinned down, and wiped out by Zakhaev's troops. All seems lost, but with one last effort a wounded Price skims his pistol to your hand. You take aim and fire off the last few bullets...



02 NAZI ZOMBIES

Call of Duty: World at War

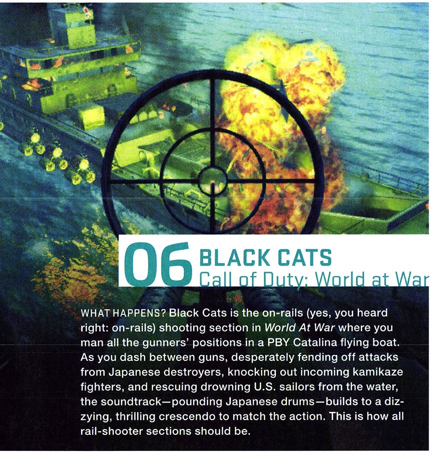
WHAT HAPPENS? Originally a strictly non-canon co-op mode, Nazi Zombies has you holding off hordes of the undead with up to three pals. The best bit? Probably the pacing. The first few rounds are calm; planning exit routes and building up funds as the occasional zombie trickles in through the window. 15 minutes later, you're bunched in a corner, back against the wall, taking out three per second. We've never felt quite so alive.



03 TANK OVERHEAD

Call of Duty 2

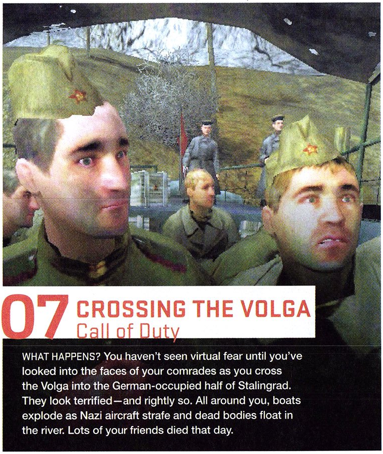
WHAT HAPPENS? Nothing makes you feel mortal like cowering in a snow-filled trench, clutching a rifle, while a squadron of Nazi tanks rolls over your head, shaking the earth around you. This may be one of *Call of Duty 2's* many pre-scripted moments, and there's no way you can actually die beneath the tank's substantial metal treads, but it is a terrifying experience nonetheless. Your AI buddies look pretty scared too...



06 BLACK CATS

Call of Duty: World at War

WHAT HAPPENS? Black Cats is the on-rails (yes, you heard right: on-rails) shooting section in *World At War* where you man all the gunners' positions in a PBY Catalina flying boat. As you dash between guns, desperately fending off attacks from Japanese destroyers, knocking out incoming kamikaze fighters, and rescuing drowning U.S. sailors from the water, the soundtrack—pounding Japanese drums—builds to a dizzying, thrilling crescendo to match the action. This is how all rail-shooter sections should be.



07 CROSSING THE VOLGA

Call of Duty

WHAT HAPPENS? You haven't seen virtual fear until you've looked into the faces of your comrades as you cross the Volga into the German-occupied half of Stalingrad. They look terrified—and rightly so. All around you, boats explode as Nazi aircraft strafe and dead bodies float in the river. Lots of your friends died that day.

11 POTATOES FOR GRENADES

Call of Duty 2

The training level amusingly has you lobbing potatoes rather than grenades, due to a lack of ammunition.

12 AC-130H LEVEL

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

Climbing into the gunner's seat and firing rounds using thermal imaging was a surreal and gripping experience.

13 PRICE KILLS AL-ASAD

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

After interrogating a terrorist, Price coldly shoots him in the head. Brutal, and comparable to murder.

14 +10 FOR A KILL

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

Bagging an online kill is satisfying enough, but the XP reward makes it all the sweeter. It's the perfect kill indicator—headshots just don't feel the same without a yellow +10.

15 KILLCAM HIGHLIGHTS

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

Some love them, some hate them, but they're a great way to rub salt into a wound, and level the learning curve without too much stress.

04 GHILLIES IN THE MIST

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

WHAT HAPPENS? Half-way through *CoD4* and you think you've seen it all. Wrong. In this flashback mission you play as a young Price, sneaking through western Russia to assassinate Zakhaev. As you wait at the start you think you're alone, but the ground in front of you rustles and you see Captain MacMillan appear from his perfectly camouflaged position. One of the best-paced solo levels ever. Fact.

05 KILLED BY A NUKE

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

WHAT HAPPENS? "Did that just happen?" was the first thing we thought when the chopper carrying our character, Sgt. Jackson, gets slammed by a shockwave and goes hurtling to the ground. It's an astonishing moment when the bomb goes off, and a harrowing one when you take control of Jackson as he crawls out of his crashed helicopter before dying of his wounds on the devastated city street.

Locate VIP in: 2:29.0

08 VIP LEVEL AFTER THE CREDITS

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

WHAT HAPPENS? Just because the credits have rolled, it doesn't mean you're off the job. *CoD4*'s second ending is a mini-mission set on an aircraft. As an operative only known as Alpha-One-One you're on board to retrieve a VIP and jump out of the plane with him. It's both mysterious and thrilling. Are you playing as Soap? Are Captain Price and Gaz still alive?

09 CHARGING HILL 400

Call of Duty 2

WHAT HAPPENS? Sure, there are plenty of death-or-glory charges in the *Call Of Duty* series, but none quite match the mad dash at the start of the Hill 400 level. In the face of heavy mortar and gun fire, your U.S. Army squad charges across open fields to try and take a well-defended German bunker. With only a handful of smoke grenades at your disposal, sometimes you survive, other times you don't.

10 SIEGE OF BRIDGE MAYENNE

Call of Duty 3

WHAT HAPPENS? With your engineer wounded, it falls to your increasingly unpredictable Sergeant to diffuse the bombs you've been sent to disarm in this important French town. Your task is to cover him as he does his job, leading to some desperate fighting as the Nazi's flood towards your squad from both ends of the bridge. It's got emotion, tension, and plenty of action—another perfect *Call Of Duty* set-piece.

16 SMASHING GAZ'S TIME IN TRAINING

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

Even *CoD* veterans will have trouble besting Gaz during training, but the feeling of accomplishment is immense.

17 SNIPING ZAKHAEV

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

Taking wind speed and the Coriolis effect into account makes the critical shot in this flashback mission much more satisfying than the rest.

18 SETTING FIRE TO A MAN

Call of Duty: World at War

Burning a man to a crisp is both satisfying and horrifying. We still feel guilty... slightly.

19 STALINGRAD

Call of Duty

This gripping mission basically re-enacts the incredible Battle of Stalingrad scene from the film *Enemy at the Gates.*

20 UNLEASH THE DOGS

Call of Duty: World at War

Aside from the superb Nazi Zombies and the lame tanks, the dogs were *World at War's* only notable addition to the multiplayer experience. They did make you feel like Mr. Burns though... Release the hounds.

Seven years ago, 22 defectors turned the tide of war

BACK IN 2002, A SMALL GROUP OF ex-*Medal of Honor* developers left Electronic Arts to form a new company, Infinity Ward, and work on a game dubbed "Call of Duty." At the time, the news barely registered—but when Infinity Ward's first game launched in 2003 to universal acclaim, it became *very* big news. *Call Of Duty 2* became a launch game for Xbox 360—overshadowing the hyped *Quake IV*—and although PS3's first entry in the series was the less than stellar *CoD3,* the following year heralded the genre-defining *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare.* Seven years after *CoD's* inauspicious birth, Infinity Ward is responsible for the "biggest entertainment release ever"—and the hype's not far off the mark. So join us, as we celebrate seven years of the seminal war shooter, from Normandy to the Soviet invasion of Washington.

GAME OF THE YEAR
CALL OF DUTY
ACTIVISION
CALL OF DUTY 2
ACTIVISION
12

CALL OF DUTY

DEV: Infinity Ward

RELEASED: October 2003

FORMATS: PC, Xbox 360, PSN

WHAT IS IT? The first *Call of Duty* game of the series, and the only one to utilize medikits instead of regenerating health.

DEFINING MOMENT: After fighting through Stalingrad and Poland, the last Soviet campaign sees Russian forces attacking Berlin and storming the Reichstag, a prominent symbol of Nazi Power. The final moments of the game have you raising the Russian flag from the roof of the building, a poignant act that marked the end of the Nazi reign.

CALL OF DUTY 2

DEV: Infinity Ward

RELEASED: October 2005

FORMATS: PC, Xbox 360

WHAT IS IT? The first *Call of Duty* to appear on a console. It featured a classic line in the credits, "No cows were harmed in the making of this game," referring to the number of dead animals in the Normandy levels.

DEFINING MOMENT: The mission to secure Hill 400 sees Allied forces battle to take the strategically prominent location from the Germans, and then fight back against a terrifying counterattack. The struggle sees you running around a central bunker trying to hold off seemingly endless German forces in a harrowing siege.

Battle Timeline

War never changes...

01

September 18, 1942
GAME: *Call of Duty*
FIGHTING AS: Sergeant Alexi Ivanovich Voronin, 13th Guards Rifle Division
BATTLE: Red Square, Stalingrad, Russia

02

November 3, 1942
GAME: *Call of Duty 2*
FIGHTING AS: Sergeant John Davis, 7th Armored Division
BATTLE: Operation Supercharge, North Africa

03

June 6, 1944
GAME: *Call of Duty*
FIGHTING AS: Private Martin, 101st Airborne Division
BATTLE: Brécourt Manor Assault, France

04

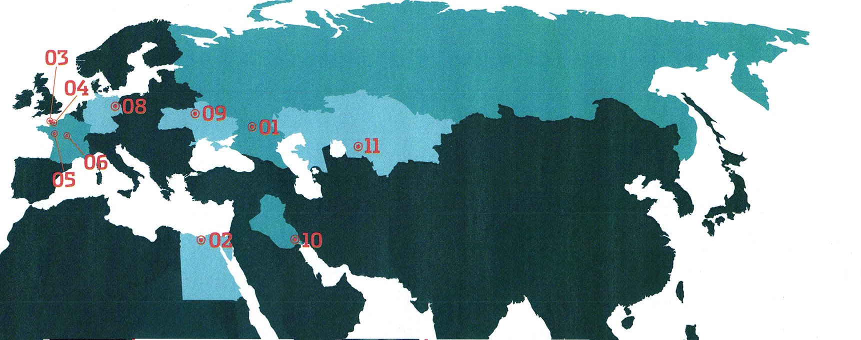
June 6, 1944
GAME: *Call of Duty 2*
FIGHTING AS: Corporal Bill Taylor, Dog Company, American 2nd Ranger Battalion
BATTLE: The Battle of Point du Hoc, France

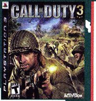
05

July 19, 1944
GAME: *Call of Duty 3*
FIGHTING AS: Private Nichols, American 29th and 90th Infantry Divisions
BATTLE: Saint-Lô, France

06

August 21, 1944
GAME: *Call of Duty 3*
FIGHTING AS: Corporal Bohater, Polish Armored Division
BATTLE: Hill 262, Mont Ormel, France





CALL OF DUTY 3

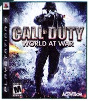
DEV: Treyarch

RELEASED: November 2006

FORMATS: PC, Xbox 360, PS3, PS2

WHAT IS IT? Treyarch's first *CoD* game, which saw more extravagant battles and button-matching mini-games.

DEFINING MOMENT: The opening level, in which you storm a church. After your convoy is attacked it's a non-stop hectic rush through a French graveyard full of Nazis, the deafening roar of the conflict is terrifying and only topped when a plane crashes into the church tower. It's one of the biggest moments in the series.



CoD: WORLD AT WAR

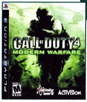
DEV: Treyarch

RELEASED: November 2008

FORMATS: PC, Xbox 360, PS3

WHAT IS IT? Treyarch's second stab at the franchise was big on action but lacked subtlety, despite Gary Oldman and Kiefer Sutherland getting on board. Still, zombie mode is classic.

DEFINING MOMENT: The American assault on the Pacific island of Peleliu, which put a tropical twist on the usual beach landing and later introduces the flamethrower. The terrifying weapon makes its debut burning out bunkers and incinerating Japanese troops—their writhing, flaming bodies marking a new level of horror for *CoD.*



CoD4: MODERN WARFARE

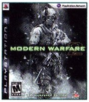
DEV: Infinity Ward

RELEASED: November 2007

FORMATS: PC, Xbox 360, PS3, Wii

WHAT IS IT? Infinity Ward's modern reboot of the series lifts the intensity of their trademark gun battles into a present day world of counter terrorism and Generation Kill-style conflicts.

DEFINING MOMENT: A nighttime Marine raid "somewhere in the Middle East." The set piece battle sees you storming buildings using infrared targeting and night vision. The result is an exhilarating and confusing mix of chaos as muzzle flashes and dancing green laser sights pierce the darkness.



CoD: MODERN WARFARE 2

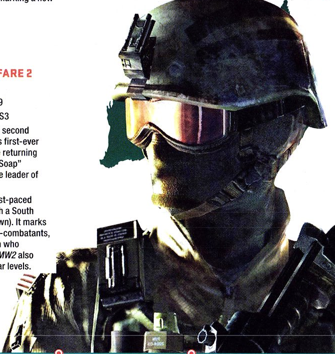
DEV: Infinity Ward

RELEASED: November 2009

FORMATS: PC, Xbox 360, PS3

WHAT IS IT? Infinity Ward's second present-day shooter and its first-ever direct sequel, with multiple returning characters. For instance, "Soap" MacTavish, is back, now the leader of Task Force 141.

DEFINING MOMENT: The fast-paced shootout and chase through a South American *favela* (shanty town). It marks the first appearance of non-combatants, meaning you need to watch who you shoot more than ever. *MW2* also introduces larger, less linear levels.



07

September 15, 1944

GAME: *Call of Duty: World at War*

FIGHTING AS: Private Miller, United States Marine Corps

BATTLE: Peleliu Island, Palau

08

April 30, 1945

GAME: *Call of Duty: World at War*

FIGHTING AS: Private Dimitri Petrenko, 150th Rifle Division of the 3rd Shock Army

BATTLE: Reichstag, Berlin

09

1996

GAME: *Call of Duty 4*

FIGHTING AS: Lieutenant Price, British Special Air Service (In a flashback sequence before he became captain.)

BATTLE: Prypiat, Ukraine

10

2011

GAME: *Call of Duty 4*

FIGHTING AS: Sergeant Paul Jackson, United States Marine Corps Force Reconnaissance, 1st Force Recon

BATTLE: Middle East

11

2016

GAME: *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*

FIGHTING AS: Sergeant Gary "Roach" Sanderson, Task Force 141

BATTLE: Kazakhstan

12

2016

GAME: *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*

FIGHTING AS: Sergeant Gary "Roach" Sanderson, Task Force 141

BATTLE: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

PS3 | PRICE: $59.99 | ESRB: Mature | PUBLISHER: Activision | DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

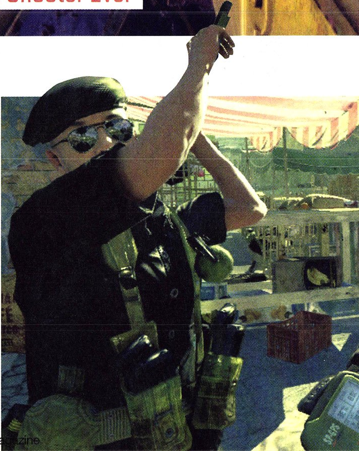
Bigger, bolder, and braver... Meet the new Best Shooter Ever

Two years is a short time, as far as game development goes. For many series, that's just enough time to slap together a few new characters, upgrade the lighting and textures on the same old settings, throw in an extra weapon, and tie the whole rushed package together with a half-developed storyline. We've come to expect, and even accept, this business-driven fact. The developers at Infinity Ward, however, clearly have not.

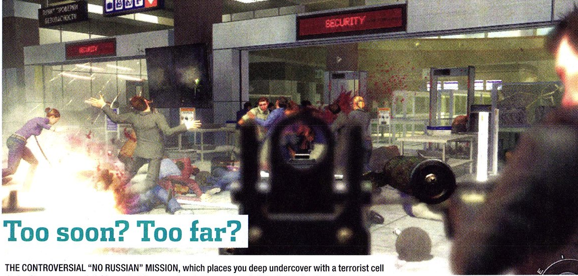
Modern Warfare 2 is much more than a simple follow-up to 2007's shooter, *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare.* This is a bigger, bolder, braver game and the absolute best kind of sequel: one that stays true to the success of the original, but then expands and departs so dramatically from the previous formula that you'll never want to go back again.

That said, you probably should replay the first *Modern Warfare* at least once, as clear memories of the previous game can greatly enhance *MW2's* single-player campaign. Beloved characters like "Soap" MacTavish and Nikolai (and others we refuse to spoil) not only return, they play major roles and often reference their past exploits together. Defeated enemies like Imran Zakhaev live on, their deaths inspiring even worse bad guys to follow in their footsteps. Some of the most spectacular scenes—including the beginning and ending—pay painstaking homage to favorite moments in *MW1.* The whole world-war plot, in fact, hinges on the aftermath of your actions in that first game.

Start playing with a similar scope and scale in mind, though, and you'll be blown away. Like we said, this is far grander stuff than before, with missions that are almost ridiculous in their ambition and diversity. The battles range from close-quarters prison assaults with night



Watch for this level. You'll love it.



Too soon? Too far?

THE CONTROVERSIAL "NO RUSSIAN" MISSION, which places you deep undercover with a terrorist cell during its massacre of civilians at a Moscow airport, has garnered a lot of attention leading up to the game's release. Is it too rough for you? Here are a few points that may help you decide:

- You are warned when first loading the Start menu, and given the option to skip the level preemptively.
- You can also skip during the mission, and won't be punished through missed plot details or Trophies.
- You don't have to kill any civilians yourself, though you can't stop the terrorists from doing so.
- The level is an integral part of the story, and is not gratuitous in that context.
- The subject matter is tackled with seriousness, in the same way it is handled in film or literature.
- *Modern Warfare 2* is rated "M" for "Mature"—and there's a reason for that.

Ultimately, we can't tell you whether this level is okay with you or not. That's your call. But we do have to applaud the developers for including such a thought-provoking, if unsettling, mission.

PlayStation
The Official Magazine
★★★★★
Editors' Choice

vision goggles, laser-sight beams, and riot shields to a wide-open, pick-your-path defense of a suburban neighborhood full of fast food restaurants and typical, American homes. One hour, you'll be sneaking through a blinding blizzard, using a silenced pistol and heartbeat monitor to pick off unsuspecting guards. The next hour, you'll be racing through a crowded marketplace in South America, jumping over chicken coops and firing frantically at the guerrilla warriors surrounding you.

For a supposedly realistic game, *Modern Warfare 2* exhibits a giddily unrestricted imagination. If something sounds cool in theory, this sequel will stretch the conventions of the shooter genre and the extremes of its alternate history storyline (did we mention you fight through the White House and Oval Office as well?) to make that crazy concept a thrilling and rewarding actuality. Seriously—at one point, you're literally floating *in space*, staring down at the Earth below. True, many of the missions seem a *tiny* bit shorter than in the original, and true, none of them *quite* reach the subtle brilliance of Chernobyl sniping in "All Ghillied Up." But you'll be too shocked and awed to really care.

MULTIPLAYER *MORE*-FARE

And that's just the campaign. Many play *Call of Duty* for multiplayer alone, and *MW2* does not disappoint there either. Infinity Ward has cranked up every aspect of the game's online component, then added an entirely new cooperative mode that ought to serve as a template for other developers: "Special Ops." These are one or two-player missions inspired by events in the Story modes of both the original *Modern Warfare* and this sequel. Like the campaign's prison scene? You and a partner can try to escape together. Like sniping? You can revisit the ghillie suits from the first game, counting 1-2-3 to coordinate double shots. Like the snowmobiles? You can race them.

In other words, there's plenty to do, and plenty to replay. Special Ops isn't a quick distraction, but a fully-formed arcade mode that delivers significant added value. We would have liked four-player co-op, and maybe some level of mission customization, but nevertheless it's a solid bonus to an already rock-solid game.

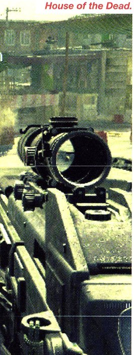
Finally, and most importantly for some, what about the competitive multiplayer? Again, this is not a superficial makeover. With 16 maps, new modes, weapons, equipment, perks, attachments, customizable kill streaks (two words: tactical nuke), and mechanics (like a possible third-person perspective), *MW2* makes its predecessor seem like a shell of a game. It's some of the most fun you'll have online, and will feel fresh even if you've been cranking through daily *Modern Warfare* matches since 2007.

Modern Warfare 2 is everything you'd want from a sequel. What the campaign lacks in subtlety, it makes up for with brutal intensity and unexpected grandeur. The multiplayer is packed with newness, but doesn't unbalance or confuse the already solid foundation. And Special Ops is an addictive extra you'll demand in all shooters from now on. When the game falters, which it rarely does, you'll be too buried under a thick pile of fun, polish, and shrapnel to even notice.

Charles Barratt and Tyler Wilde

★★★★★

Tell us this doesn't remind you of old light-gun games like *Time Crisis* or *House of the Dead*.



Unless you live in a town where flaming wreckage plummets from the sky on a regular basis, be prepared for some awe-inspiring scenes.

DIRECTV
SATELLITE TELEVISION

NOW GET OVER 150 CHANNELS

NOW FOR ONLY ~~$55.99 mo.~~ **$29.99 mo.** for 12 months
The CHOICE™ package

local channels included†

abc CBS NBC FOX PBS CW myTV

And many more of your favorite independent channels in select markets.

And many more!

Price includes $21 bill credit for 12 mos. after rebate, plus an add'l $5 when you submit rebate online, register acct. on directv.com with valid email & consent to email alerts.^

Save $26 a month and lock in your price for *one year!*

For a limited time get:

FREE
FOR 3 MONTHS^
Get 21 movie channels!
starz 12 Channels
SHOWTIME 9 Channels
Over $70 Value!
With activation of CHOICE XTRA™ package or higher.

FREE
DIRECTV® HD DVR UPGRADE
$199 Value
Models may vary.
Set your home DVR with any cell phone or computer.°
With CHOICE XTRA™ package or higher.**

FREE
PRO INSTALL IN UP TO 4 ROOMS
Custom installation extra. Handling & delivery fee $19.95. Lease fee of $5/mo. for second & each additional receiver.

Spanish Available
DIRECTV Más™ Service
Over 150 of the best Spanish- and English-language channels!°°
$29.99 mo. for 12 months
The ÓPTIMO MÁS™ package
Price includes $10 bill credit for 12 mos. after rebate, plus an add'l $5 when you submit rebate online, register acct. on directv.com with valid email & consent to email alerts.^

Offers end 2/8/10 & are based on approved credit. Credit card req'd. New customers only. (Lease req'd. Must maintain programming, DVR service and/or HD Access.) Hardware available separately.

It's as easy as 1,2,3
1 **CALL** to schedule your free installation
2 **SELECT** the package you want
3 **ENJOY** America's #1 Satellite TV Service

Switch from cable to DIRECTV!

1-877-478-2560

NO EQUIPMENT TO BUY!
NO START-UP COSTS!

Credit card not required in MA and PA. †Eligibility for local channels based on service address. °DVR Scheduler requires Internet access via computer or mobile phone and directv.com login. Remote connections may vary. In rare instances, scheduled recording(s) may not be recognized. Only available on certain receivers. Visit directv.com/dvrscheduler for details. °°Includes English-language broadcast channels with alternate Spanish audio. ^**BILL CREDIT/PROGRAMMING OFFER:** Free SHOWTIME for 3 months, a value of $38.97. Free Starz and SHOWTIME for 3 months, a value of $72. LIMIT ONE PROGRAMMING OFFER PER ACCOUNT. Featured package names and prices: CHOICE $55.99/mo.; CHOICE XTRA $60.99/mo. In order to receive full $26 credit, customer must submit rebate form online and register account on directv.com prior to rebate redemption. Requires valid email address and must agree to receive emails. ÓPTIMO MÁS $44.99/mo. In order to receive full $15 credit, customer must submit rebate form online and register account on directv.com prior to rebate redemption. Requires valid email address and must agree to receive emails. **Upon DIRECTV System activation, customer will receive rebate instructions (included in customer's first DIRECTV bill, a separate mailing or, in the state of New York, from retailer) and must comply with the terms on the instructions. Rebate begins 6–8 weeks after receipt of online redemption, or 8-12 weeks for mail-in redemption.** Account must be in "good standing," as determined by DIRECTV in its sole discretion, to remain eligible. DIRECTV not responsible for late, lost, illegible, mutilated, incomplete, misdirected or postage-due mail. IF BY THE END OF THE PROMOTIONAL PRICE PERIOD(S) CUSTOMER DOES NOT CONTACT DIRECTV TO CHANGE SERVICE THEN ALL SERVICES WILL AUTOMATICALLY CONTINUE AT THE THEN-PREVAILING RATES, INCLUDING THE $5/MO. LEASE FEE FOR THE 2ND AND EACH ADDITIONAL RECEIVER. In certain markets, programming/pricing may vary. Package pricing at directv.com/packages. DIRECTV System has a feature that restricts access to channels. LIMIT ONE BILL CREDIT PER DIRECTV ACCOUNT. **HD DVR INSTANT REBATE:** Advanced equipment instant rebate requires activation of the CHOICE XTRA ($60.99/mo.) package or above; MÁS ULTRA or above; Jadeworld; or any qualifying international service bundle, which shall include the PREFERRED CHOICE programming package. DVR service ($6/mo.) and HD Access fee ($10/mo.) required for HD DVR lease. LIMIT ONE ADVANCED EQUIPMENT REBATE PER DIRECTV ACCOUNT. SYSTEM LEASE: Purchase 24 months for advanced receivers of any DIRECTV base programming package ($29.99/mo. or above) or qualifying international services bundle required. **FAILURE TO ACTIVATE ALL OF THE DIRECTV SYSTEM EQUIPMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE EQUIPMENT LEASE ADDENDUM MAY RESULT IN A CHARGE OF $150 PER RECEIVER NOT ACTIVATED. IF YOU FAIL TO MAINTAIN YOUR PROGRAMMING, DIRECTV MAY CHARGE A PRORATED FEE OF $480. RECEIVERS ARE AT ALL TIMES PROPERTY OF DIRECTV AND MUST BE RETURNED UPON CANCELLATION OF SERVICE, OR ADDITIONAL FEES APPLY. VISIT directv.com OR CALL 1-800-DIRECTV FOR DETAILS.** Programming, pricing, terms and conditions subject to change at any time. Pricing residential. Taxes not included. Receipt of DIRECTV programming is subject to the DIRECTV Customer Agreement; copy provided at directv.com/legal and in your first bill. Starz and related channels and service marks are the property of Starz Entertainment Group LLC. Showtime and related marks are registered trademarks of Showtime Networks Inc., a CBS Company. ©2009 DIRECTV, Inc. DIRECTV and the Cyclone Design logo, CHOICE XTRA, FAMILY, CHOICE, ÓPTIMO MÁS and DIRECTV Más are trademarks of DIRECTV, Inc. All other trademarks and service marks are the property of their respective owners.

Reviews

Scores | Analysis | Buying Advice

RATINGS

★★★★★ **LEGENDARY**
A game so amazing, the entire PTOM staff recommends it. A must buy!

★★★★½ **SUPERB**
Not quite a timeless classic, but one of the finest of its breed.

★★★★ **GREAT!**
A finely crafted, thoroughly enjoyable experience. Worth your time and money.

★★★½ **SOLID**
A strong game. We noticed some flaws, but there's more to like than loathe.

★★★ **ENJOYABLE**
If the topic/license/style is your thing, there's enough to keep you entertained.

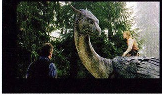
★★½ **MEDIOCRE**
An equal blend of sweet and sour. Discerning gamers can find better.

★★ **SCARRED**
A smattering of entertainment hidden amongst an abundance of flaws.

★½ **FRUSTRATING**
"Argh!" will be the self-created soundtrack of this game. No thank you.

★ **PAINFUL**
We played it so you don't have to. Now you owe us cookies.

½ **BROKEN**
Hey, it comes in a free plastic box! Wee!



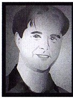
Win junk from Eric's desk! We'll select one winner from emails that correctly identify the three photos from our Rating scale and explain how they're related. Send your answers with the subject line "January Ratings" to PTOM_Letters@futureus.com.

Hot 5 List Top Picks from Recent Issues

1)	**CoD: Modern Warfare 2** p. 72	★★★★★
2)	**LittleBigPlanet (PSP)** p. 79	★★★★★
3)	**Assassin's Creed II** | PS3 | Hol 09	★★★★★
4)	**WWE SVR 2010** | PS3 | Dec 09	★★★★½
5)	**Uncharted 2** | PS3 | Nov 09	★★★★★

Meet the experts delivering your buying advice

It's the New Year! Time for the PTOM staff to look ahead and ponder the games *we'd* like for 2010.



ERIC BRATCHER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Barring the revelation of a new *Legend of Dragoon* or *Psychonauts 2,* Eric is all about *The Last Guardian. Ico,* the first game in the series was a captivating adventure shared by a boy and a princess. The prequel, *Shadow of the Colossus,* delivered another unforgettable companion, Argo the horse. *The Last Guardian* has a huge cat/bird thingy. Sounds like Eric needs a friend.

NOW PLAYING: *Dragon Age: Origins, Assassin's Creed II, CoD: Modern Warfare 2*

ROGER BURCHILL
MANAGING EDITOR

When Sega intimated that they wouldn't be bringing *Yakuza 3* to the U.S., Roger considered taking the whole year off. Now, that they've indicated that they haven't completely ruled out the possibilty, hope has blossomed in his blackened heart. But if *Yakuza 3* doesn't come, he'll probably just spend all his time inventing new ways to torture people in *Just Cause 2.* How healthy.

NOW PLAYING: *LEGO Rock Band, Band Hero, Karaoke Revolution, FIFA Soccer 10*

KEN BOUSQUET
ART DIRECTOR

Fortunately for Ken *FIFA* comes out every year whether he is ready or not. So he sits in his chair waiting for Jon from the mail room to arrive. Unfortunately, *FIFA 10* already came out so there is really nothing for him to look forward to. Unless he gets his hands on the elusive copy of *PES 2010,* that is. Until that happens he will practice his free kicks and wait patiently for 2011 to arrive.

NOW PLAYING: *FIFA Soccer 10, Brütal Legend, Assassin's Creed II*

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH
ASSISTANT EDITOR

It's rare that a game embodies Scott's actual worldview, so he can't wait to sink his teeth into *BioShock 2.* True, the unusually large development team (four studios?!) and Ken Levine's limited involvement are somewhat disconcerting, but Scott has faith that 2K Marin can put together a compelling single-player experience. Multiplayer on the other hand, well…we'll have to wait and see.

NOW PLAYING: *Guitar Hero: Van Halen, CoD: Modern Warfare 2, Uncharted 2, MAG*

CARLOS RUIZ
EX-INTERN

Actually, we're really not sure what game Carlos the Intern wants in 2010, since he's the third staffer to depart during the Great Exodus of '09. These things do happen in threes—just like celebrity deaths. But if Carlos were still here, we have a feeling he'd vote for a new *Battletoads*...or whatever game of the week he could score from us for free. Stay thirsty, our friend.

NOW PLAYING: *Batman: Arkham Asylum, Marvel vs. Capcom 2...*(Probably.)

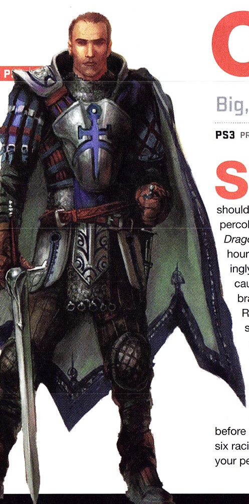
MIKEL REPARAZ
GAMESRADAR

Mikel would love a remake of the Peter Molyneux classic *Syndicate,* but its futuristic, *GTA*-style take on real-time strategy might not hold up so well against modern carjacking games. So instead, he'll spend another year hoping in vain for a new *Jaws* title, especially one that's a survival-horror game from the point of view of someone hunting—and being hunted by—the shark. For God's sake, someone feed the man!

NOW PLAYING: *Assassin's Creed II, Borderlands, Uncharted 2*

DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

Big, beautiful, and brutal RPG action



PS3 PRICE: $59.99 ESRB: Mature PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts DEVELOPER: BioWare

Six very different beginnings. Several world-defining endings. Gazillions of should/shouldn't, will/won't decisions percolating in the middle. It's not just *Dragon Age: Origins'* epic 80-plus hour odyssey through an engagingly realized fantasy realm that will cause fatigue. It's the surprising brain ache. This thinking-man's RPG is remarkable for many reasons, but its overbearing scale and variety are the parts that stand out from the get-go.

It begins however you want. You choose from six stories, six varied backgrounds (each a good six to eight hours long before the main quest even starts), six racial and cultural traits that shape your personality. The only common thread is that no matter what origin you select, Fate has decreed that you will become a Grey Warden, a savior of your land…if only the people would support this noble goal.

Aside from that central quest, however, there's incredible variety in the way the rest of the game unfolds. It starts with the dialogue. Extensive conversation trees let you retune your origin story, and moral dilemmas enable you to change your mind and doctrine with a simple button-click. These all affect how the other folks in this world treat you, and by the conclusion of your journey, you'll realize that the numerous, seemingly innocuous conversations had a very real and tangible impact on your game's ending. Who does what for whom, and how hard? It's in those moments that *Dragon Age: Origins* will feel like the greatest achievement in RPG history, but you'll have endured—maybe barely survived—a grueling, frequently fruitless journey.

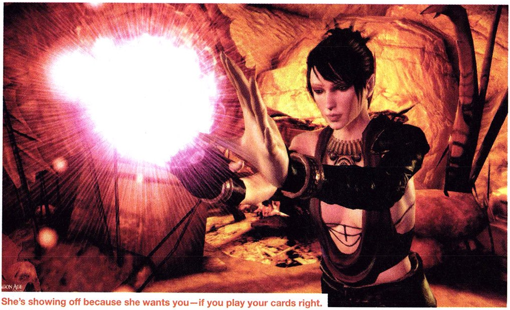
Diverging Paths

Saving the kingdom from a ravening horde of Darkspawn is trickier than you'd think—it seems everyone has their own things going on. You'll be reminded of a Monty Python skit when random villagers say (to paraphrase), "Ooh, saving the land, are you? Well, that's nice. I'd help, but go fetch my dirty washing first." Ingrates.

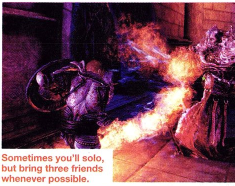
Still, those odd jobs or random encounters can lead to new characters joining your ranks. You and three other companions embark on most missions, and while some story-central characters always join, your party varies depending on your dialogue choices or the actions of NPCs. We found a balance for our warrior by bringing two mages (one offensive, one a healer) and a rogue to unlock chests that may hold scraps or real treasures. You may choose differently.

What all these dialogue, race, and cohort options mean is that

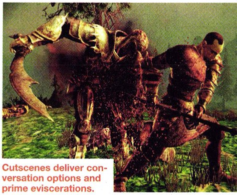
The bigger they are...the harder they hit, and the tougher they are to make fall.



She's showing off because she wants you—if you play your cards right.



Sometimes you'll solo, but bring three friends whenever possible.



Cutscenes deliver conversation options and prime eviscerations.

> "Your game experience will play out very differently from ours."

your game experience will play out very differently from ours. Everyone nimbly navigates the same broad map (maybe traveling to towns in a different order, ignoring or embracing random pleas for assistance across this war torn land), encounters most of the same people, and tackles the same dungeons and challenges. But most everything else is up for grabs.

Our relationships—even the potentially intimate ones (saying the right things and giving appropriate gifts will help you woo a girlfriend or boyfriend)—will be wildly different. Your dialogue choices; allegiances with factions within the cities, villages, and wilderness routes; random encounters or conversations with merchants, refugees, and orphans will all shape your own story. And in combat, there's a huge difference between classes. If we picked a mage as our main character, and you a warrior, our experiences will be worlds apart.

Crossing Swords

These differences arise from the fact that combat gets very tactical, and the various classes are so specialized that each requires a unique strategy to achieve victory. Fundamentally, you need to keep all four party members alive—each will have a critical role—and that requires brainpower. For example, your healer should be primed to support the warrior and damage-dealing mage (if you have them). If they're attacked—which they will be…a *lot*—what are their choices?

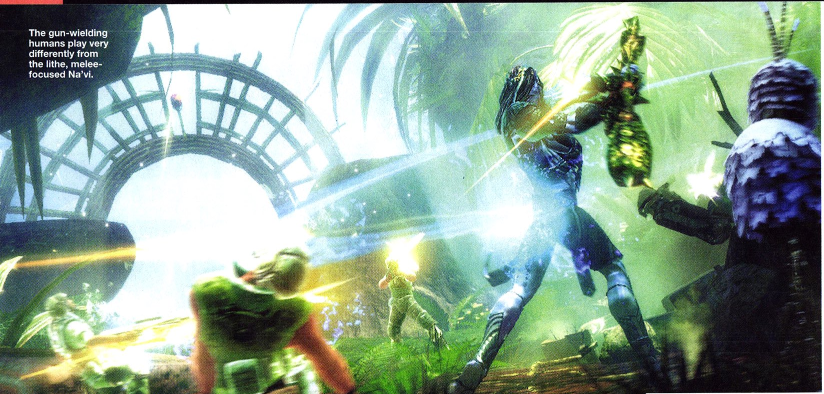
The answer to that question depends entirely upon what skills you've given them and how you've arranged their combat tactics. Choosing skills for each character as you level up your party seems somewhat arbitrary at first. Pick the most death-inducing effect and then make sure it's equipped in the next combat. But the strategic depth of this system soon reveals a complex layer of management that can totally change the outcome of battle. Similarly, while you can pause and switch between any character in the frenzy of combat, or even queue up specific attacks for each character before unpausing, you'll appreciate having an actual, premeditated game plan—more so once flanking maneuvers are introduced, or when enemies prove too clever to charge madly at you as they would in most games. You can also assign detailed behaviors to each party member. Telling your attack mage to always aim for whatever enemy you're targeting is a simple tactic. Instructing your warrior to change to another stance (which gives him different attacks) once his stamina drops below a certain threshold is a more sophisticated example, but a potentially life-saving one. Learning to manage these layers of complexity—especially on the fly during battle—takes time, but proves massively rewarding once you've nailed it.

As *Origins* regains pace and ingenuity you'll revel with renewed gusto in a role intrinsic to Ferelden's survival. Don't be surprised if some late-game decisions make you literally stop, walk around, ask a significant other what you should do before you pick a direction. Oh sure, you can focus on gettin' some sexy on (for Trophies only, of course), leveling up, and snagging some new items, but after this extraordinary level of commitment, your focus will be on winning… though what that victory looks like to you could be very different from our experience.

Rob Smith

★★★★½

"Is...is anyone seeing this? The gushing? Wow, just look at it. I did that. Sweet."



The gun-wielding humans play very differently from the lithe, melee-focused Na'vi.

James Cameron's **Avatar The Game**

Stereoscopic? Yes. But also stereotypical

PS3 PRICE: $59.99 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: Ubisoft DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal

PS3 | R

Make no mistake about it, *James Cameron's Avatar The Game* is a good accompaniment to the first major Cameron film since 1997's *Titanic.* Ubisoft has re-created the lush, vibrant Na'vi home world in videogame form, giving this straightforward third-person shooter just enough love and craft to satisfy potential movie fans. But strip off Cameron's name and remove the cinema tie-in and 3D gadgetry (you can play the game in 3D if you've got the right high-end gear) and *Avatar* is revealed as average.

In an expansive single-player campaign, you're presented with the option of playing as a human soldier or a Na'vi avatar. The 10-foot tall Na'vi wield great strength and athleticism, but primitive hand weapons, making for excellent close-quarter fighters. Humans rely on heavy weaponry like nail guns and tactical air strikes, but are weaker at close-in combat.

This contrast in play styles is deep enough to make each campaign rewarding, but there are little gameplay issues that wear down our enthusiasm. *Avatar* has pacing issues and little seems original or exciting. In one typical mission after another, you upgrade weapons and skills, blast animals and enemies, rinse and repeat, with little care over who lives or dies. Thus, the "been there, done that" action eventually begins to test your patience more than your skill. And if it doesn't, the poor voice acting and writing will.

The controls are passable for basic shooting and strafing against mindless AI, but when challenged by real-life humans, you'll cringe and curse at the imprecision. The controls are especially problematic when piloting a vehicle or attempting an accurate jump across basic structures like rocks and logs. (Though, to be fair, in one scenario we watched as an *AI*-controlled Na'vi fell off a log three times trying to reach us.)

Avatar's multiplayer mode reflects the distinct fight styles of both camps, but provides a disappointing paint-by-numbers experience. The 10 maps, five modes, and 16-player support look robust on paper, but the maps are lackluster, the fighting unbalanced, and the gameplay hampered by the aforementioned sloppy controls.

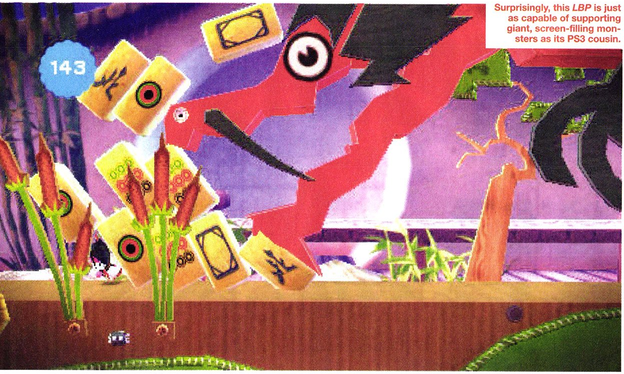
Avatar is lush, beautiful, and distinct looking, and in the unlikely event you actually own a stereoscopic TV and high-end 3D glasses, you can play in full 3D. The 3D tech is fun and worth experiencing but has a disorienting effect. Still, most gamers don't yet have the gear to enjoy that aspect—and this isn't the game that's going to convince you to run out and make that purchase.

Douglass C. Perry

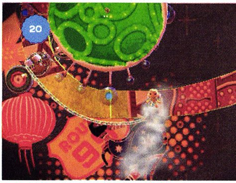
★★★½

There's no shortage of spectacle even if you don't have 3D glasses.

You can constantly upgrade weapons (like flame-throwers and shotguns) and skills (like instant health and berserk).



Surprisingly, this *LBP* is just as capable of supporting giant, screen-filling monsters as its PS3 cousin.



Don't want to design right away? *LBP* sports some memorably creative story levels to keep you busy 'til then.

LittleBigPlanet

The PSP pulls off the impossible

PSP PRICE: $39.99 ESRB: Everyone PUBLISHER: SCEA DEVELOPER: SCE Studio Cambridge

PlayStation
The Official Magazine
★★★★★
Editors' Choice

When *LittleBigPlanet* was first unveiled at the 2007 Game Developers Conference, the crowd was floored. Its easy, intuitive approach to user-created level design was like nothing anyone had seen before, at least not in a console game, and it seemed like a grand promise only the PS3 could fulfill. So when it was announced that *LittleBigPlanet* was coming to the PSP, it was impossible not to suspect it would end up a horrible, stripped-down shadow of the original. Thankfully, those fears were wrong.

LittleBigPlanet loses a few things in the translation to PSP—most notably multiplayer co-op, some level-building features and the third layer of depth in its 2.5D levels—but that aside, it's a beautifully realized game that comes remarkably close to delivering what its PS3 cousin offers.

This new *LBP* boasts the same physics-driven platforming gameplay (slightly tweaked to be more responsive, actually), the same easy, rubber-stamp approach to designing custom levels, and the same ability to share your creations online. You can still plaster nearly every surface with stickers, and your Sackperson is still customizable with a slew of different accessories and dynamic facial expressions (although you can't wave its arms and wiggle its head anymore). And even with all that going on, it's one of the best-looking games on PSP.

We miss playing with friends, but we're too impressed by everything else to be sad.

Like the original, *LBP* consists of four main sections: the pre-made story levels, the "My Moon" level creator, the "My Pod" space (now just a tool for customizing your Sackperson and online profile), and the downloadable community levels. The new story levels are meaty and fairly amazing, with enough personality and clever, complex design to goad would-be creators to do better.

As before, each set of levels follows a "creator" theme (with seven in all), and each features a few optional bonus levels that tend to end the moment you die.

The real meat of *LBP* is the level-creation, though, and here the PSP version is especially impressive. While some features have been stripped out—you can't, for example, cut shaped holes in the middle of objects anymore—there are still a ton of materials and tools at your disposal, from cardboard and glass to pistons, switches, and dynamic music. Even the creature-creation tools are here, enabling you to populate levels with autonomous monsters. With a little planning and creativity, it's possible to create and share some incredible content. This is an amazing technological feat, and anyone with a PSP, an imagination and a sense of fun should play it immediately. Mikel Reparaz

★★★★★

Since the game's only redeeming quality is Van Halen's music, we can't help but wonder why their songs weren't simply released as DLC for *Guitar Hero 5.*

Guitar Hero: Van Halen

More like Van *Failen*

PS3 PRICE: $59.99 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: Activision DEVELOPER: Underground Development/Neversoft/Budcat Creations

Sorry for the obvious "Van Failen" pun, but it's deserved. Van Halen's music is perfectly suited for music games: shredding guitar solos, over-the-top vocals, and some of the most recognizable guilty-pleasure anthems that heavy metal has to offer. So the songs *are* a blast to play...yet massive failings throughout the rest of the game kill the fun.

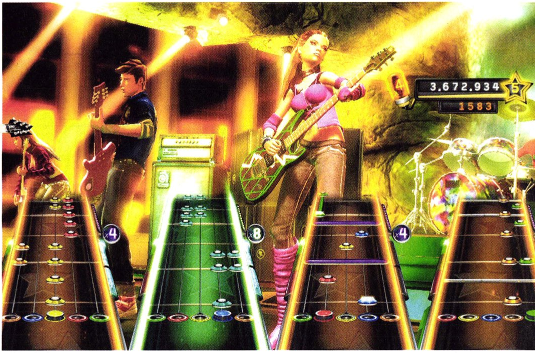
The biggest problem? The game's based on 2008's *Guitar Hero: World Tour,* not the more recent and vastly improved *Guitar Hero 5.* So all those awesome new features—like unique bonus challenges for each song, improved animations, and drop in/drop out Party Play—have all disappeared.

And though Van Halen's 28 tracks rock, the other 19 songs (with no DLC announced) feel like a complete grab bag. Yellowcard? Third Eye Blind? *Another* Weezer song? Seriously, what do any of these bands have to do with Van Halen? And where is all the bonus content? The only real extra is Rock Facts mode, which lets you watch your band play a song as dull trivia scrolls across the screen.

Guitar Hero: Van Halen is a step back for the franchise. If you got it free by preordering *GH5,* great. But right here, right now, it's not worth 60 bucks.

Scott Butterworth

★★½



Band Hero

'Cause *Band Hero* sounds catchier than *Guitar Hero for Tweens*

PS3 PRICE: $59.99 ESRB: Everyone 10+ PUBLISHER: Activision/RedOctane DEVELOPER: Neversoft Ent.

Confusion. That's your initial reaction when you pop in *Band Hero* for the first time. "Um, why's it called *Band Hero?* It's basically *Guitar Hero 5.*" Except the menu's and graphical interludes are awash in pink and lavender and feature an innocuous 'toon style that makes an *iCarly* episode seem edgy. *Someone* figured out that most music gamers were already in the *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band* camps and the only undecideds were the Tweeners. *Violà...Band Hero.*

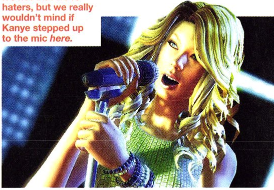
The 65-track song collection is where *Band Hero's* style shift is most notable. Gone are most of the darker, brooding, hardcore Rock tracks—replaced by less-threatening offerings from acts like Spice Girls, Nelly Furtado, and Hillary Duff. To be fair, there are less obviously Tween-oriented tunes throughout the song collection—some with immensely challenging note tracks (the Mighty Mighty Bosstone's "The Impression That I Get" for one). But we could have done without the six tracks from dev Neversoft's house band and three Taylor Swift songs are about three too many.

But while the music, characters, and performance settings have all taken a step towards the pop side, the *Guitar Hero* franchise's polished gameplay remains unsullied. The ability to tailor your band's vocal/instrument line-up as you like, the excellent competitive multiplayer, and the convenient and accessible Party Play mode are all highlights. The new Sing-Along mode (aka Karaoke) isn't a groundbreaking addition, but it's...nice.

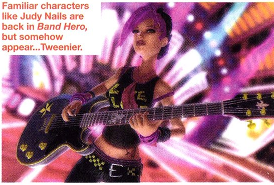
We could debate endlessly whether there was any need for Activision to come up with the *Band Hero* moniker, but the end result is another solid *Guitar Hero* game. But one thats appeal is more directly linked to your opinion of the track list than usual.

Roger Burchill

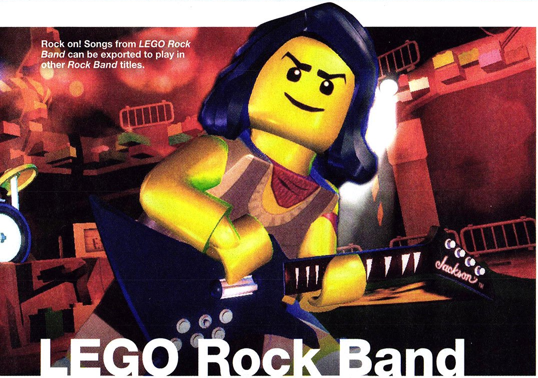
★★★★



It's not that we're haters, but we really wouldn't mind if Kanye stepped up to the mic *here.*



Familiar characters like Judy Nails are back in *Band Hero,* but somehow appear...Tweenier.



Rock on! Songs from *LEGO Rock Band* can be exported to play in other *Rock Band* titles.

LEGO Rock Band

Building a fan base, one brick at a time

PS3 PRICE: $49.99 ESRB: Everyone 10+ PUBLISHER: Warner Bros. Ent. Int./MTV Games DEVELOPER: Traveller's Tales/Harmonix Factory

When *LEGO Rock Band* was first announced, the jaded gamer in us started muttering something to the effect of "…marketing ploy to serve the brand Kool-aid to kid gamers…" Which in all honesty, it probably is. But *LEGO* game entities possess a distinct personality all their own, and jaded as we may be, we can't help but find them endearing. *LEGO Rock Band* is no exception.

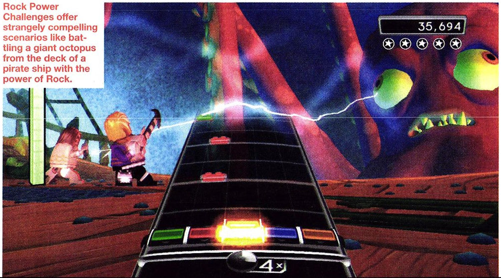
In gameplay terms, *LRB* is essentially no different than any other *Rock Band* title. You'll still rock out in the standard form with a mic, guitar, bass, and drums (or any combination therein). The only significant gameplay addition is the Rock Power Challenges which present scenarios like demolishing a building or battling a giant octopus using the "power of Rock" (your performance) as your "weapon." The meager 45-song track list is *LGR*'s weak point (compared to *Band Hero*'s 65 tracks) but the Rock-lite ensemble of songs will still appeal to most gamers.

But *LGR*'s true calling cards are its style and personality. From the opening intro cinematic (which mimics and builds upon the first *Rock Band's* opener) to the Story mode cutscenes to the characters to the venues to the seemingly endless array of collectible vehicles and items, everything is presented in the classic LEGO-style with keen observational humor and wry wit. It's cool enough to see a group like Queen represented in LEGO form, but when you come across Freddie Mercury in a UFO during an alien-abduction-themed cutscene…well, that's absurdly awesome.

Roger Burchill

★★★★

Rock Power Challenges offer strangely compelling scenarios like battling a giant octopus from the deck of a pirate ship with the power of Rock.



34,861
rea- son can't ex- plain

Extensive customization options mean singer and venues can be tailored to your tastes…

Karaoke Revolution

Back on Track

PS3 PRICE: $49.99 ESRB: Teen
PUBLISHER: Konami DEVELOPER: Blitz Games

For a game with "revolution" in its title, there's not all that much radical innovation going on here. Instead, this latest installment in Konami's party singing franchise plays a bit of catch-up with its rival *SingStar*-series by offering licensed master recordings (as opposed to cover versions—finally), the ability to download additional tracks, and even online play.

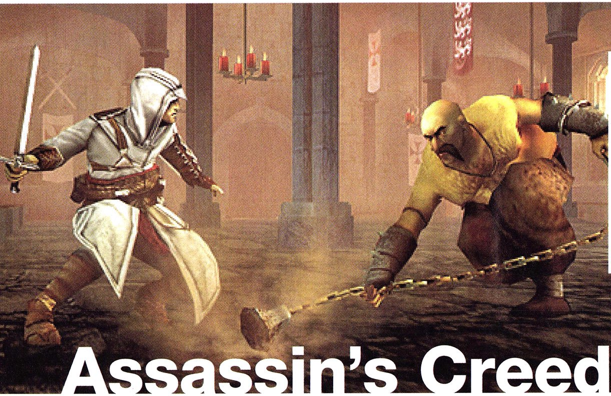
There are a wide variety of customization options ranging from aesthetic elements like singer and venue creation to more functional features such as playlists and expanded party modes. But as impressive as the level of adjustability is, we're not sure that it really enhances the experience or improves on singing along to a music video as with *SingStar*.

Still, at its core, *Karaoke Revolution* is a solid, enjoyable singing game. The 50 included tracks offer a wide range of artists from a variety of eras. While the overall flavor leans towards pop music, most everyone will find at least a few agreeable tunes to warble. And while *KR* isn't exactly revolutionary—c'mon, it's karaoke—just add some friends and your beverage of choice and you'll have a good time.

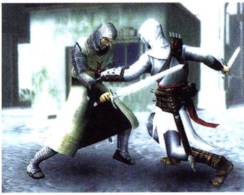
Roger Burchill

★★★½

…but *Karaoke Revolution's* style seems more *American Idol* than Rock 'n' Roll.



◄ Unlike *AC's* pushovers, *Bloodlines'* assassination targets put up full-fledged boss fights.



Combat's improved since *AC*, but it's still more about timing than hack-and-slash.

Assassin's Creed Bloodlines

Not ready to leave the Crusades behind? Neither is Altair

PSP PRICE: $39.99 ESRB: Mature PUBLISHER: Ubisoft DEVELOPER: Griptonite

While *Assassin's Creed II* hits seemingly every other platform, the PSP is getting a side-story sequel to the first game, starring Crusades-era assassin Altair. Picking up where *Assassin's Creed* left off, *Bloodlines* follows Altair to the island nation of Cyprus, which has been bought outright by the sinister Templar order. Determined to destroy them, Altair kidnaps female Templar commander Maria Thorpe and heads off to investigate.

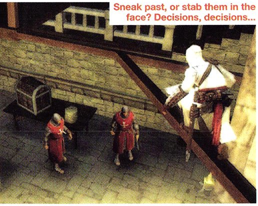
What follows is an impressive handheld recreation of the first game's action, complete with free running, quiet stabbing, and the ability to scale buildings like a monkey. The environments are less ambitious than the first game's—Altair explores the cities of Limassol and Kyrenia, which are divided into small, walled "districts" that load up separately—and the crowds are almost nonexistent. But the high-speed exploration, climbing, and combat are still pretty fun.

In fact, the combat's a little better than in the first game, as it's much easier to simply hack foes to death. You'll also have to switch up your game during *Bloodlines'* six boss fights, in which reversals—the old standby for winning fights quickly—often won't work. Other improvements include linear story missions, which replace the repetitive side tasks (still present, but now strictly optional) Altair had to complete in the first game just to unlock assassinations.

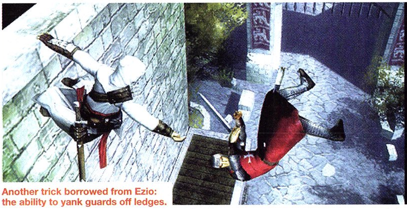
Ultimately, though, *Bloodlines* is held back by the limitations of the PSP format. It looks great and the camera is rarely a problem, but the smaller, less-detailed environments lack the clever design and sense of freedom that made exploring the first game a blast. The controls are finicky, too, and it's not uncommon to hit a wall or ladder at the wrong angle and go leaping off in the opposite direction you intended. Finally, most enemies are barely a threat at all—because only a few can be onscreen at a time, it's easy to evade them, kill them, or simply run to the next district before they can wear you down. *Bloodlines* is still enjoyable (and a big improvement over the disappointing *Altair's Chronicles),* but if you weren't a fan of *Assassin's Creed* to begin with, its scaled-down action and backstory insight won't change your mind.

Mikel Reparaz

★★★½



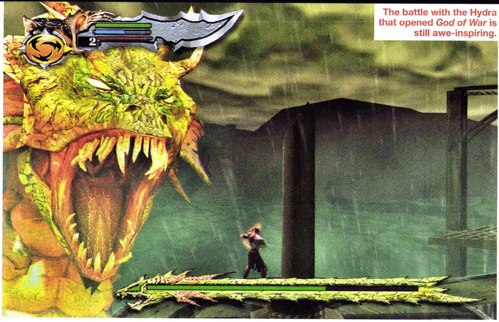
Sneak past, or stab them in the face? Decisions, decisions...



Another trick borrowed from Ezio: the ability to yank guards off ledges.

Synchronization Complete

We've said it before, but it bears repeating: connecting *Bloodlines* to the PS3's *Assassin's Creed II* nets you cool stuff. Altair can get health upgrades and hidden-blade improvements earned by *AC II's* Ezio, while Ezio's inheritance consists of six unique weapons—one for each defeated *Bloodlines* boss—and any valuable Templar coins Altair finds.



The battle with the Hydra that opened *God of War* is still awe-inspiring.

God of War Collection

Ripping ancient Greece a new one never looked so good

PS3 PRICE: $39.99 ESRB: Mature PUBLISHER: SCEA DEVELOPER: SCE Studios Santa Monica/Bluepoint Games

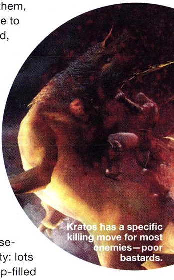
While *God of War III* won't be in our hands until March, *God of War Collection* takes two of the PS2's finest and best-looking action games, *God of War* and *God of War II,* and remasters them in full HD. It's not perfect—the combination of PS3-caliber textures on PS2 polygon models is a little weird, and the cutscenes that use in-game characters weren't remastered, and so look fuzzy and jaggy by comparison. But overall the games look considerably better than their original system-limit pushing PS2 incarnations.

If you've already played through the games on PS2, there's really not much to say, except that each game now has its own set of Trophies, and if you want the definitive editions of these games, *Collection* is worth picking up. The monstrous Hydra (along with all the series' other towering beasts) has never looked better.

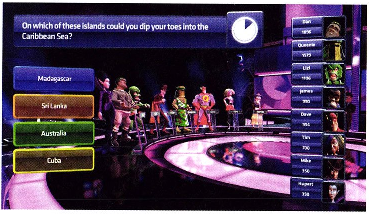
If you *haven't* played them, now's the perfect chance to be introduced to the bald, half-naked, perpetually angry badass Kratos and his gore-soaked exploits. These mainly involve ripping every monster in Greece to bloody shreds in a misguided—but immensely captivating—quest for revenge and absolution from his past sins.

Luckily, there's much more to the *God of War* series than endless brutality: lots of ingenious puzzles, trap-filled platforming sequences, and chances to earn upgradable magical attacks and weapons. These were two of the PS2's greatest games, and they're just as compelling—and much better looking—on PS3. It's hard to argue with that package. Mikel Reparaz

★★★★½



Kratos has a specific killing move for most enemies—poor bastards.



On which of these islands could you dip your toes into the Caribbean Sea?

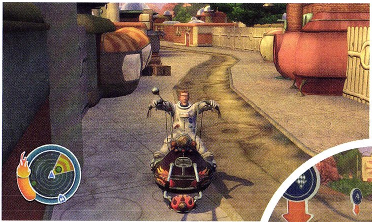
Buzz! Quiz World

PS3 PRICE: $59.99 with buzzers, $39.99 game only ESRB: Teen
PUBLISHER: SCEA DEVELOPER: Relentless Software

It's *Buzz!* (Again!) Ring in with the (required) wireless buzzer controllers as you tackle 5,000 more trivia questions with up to eight players. New game modes (including a make-your-own-questions option) join a flashier presentation, proper online play, and simpler menus, but there are fewer single-player options and you can't leave an empty online lobby without quitting the game. *Quiz World's* about as fun as *Quiz TV;* maybe next year we'll get the best bits of both. Dan Amrich

★★★★

Queenie
Lizi
James

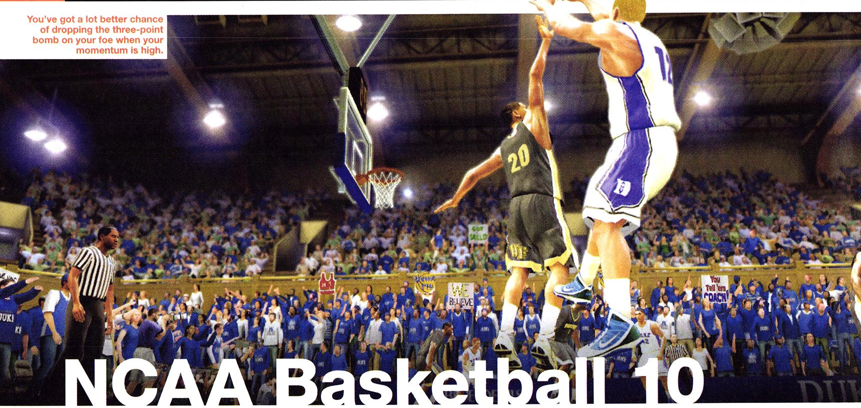


Planet 51

PS3 PRICE: $49.99 ESRB: Everyone
PUBLISHER: Sega DEVELOPER: Pyro Studios

You'll start this vehicular adventure playing as teenaged "alien" Lem, plodding around on various bicycles doing mundane missions like mowing lawns. It picks up a little once astronaut Chuck and the puppy-like robot "Rover" turn up, bringing along some avoid-the-cops and exploration sections to complement the occasional race. But most vehicles still handle like sluggish, bacon-wrapped hockey pucks, the camera's wonky and there are far too many loading screens. Think twice before exploring this planet. Alan Kim

★★



You've got a lot better chance of dropping the three-point bomb on your foe when your momentum is high.

NCAA Basketball 10

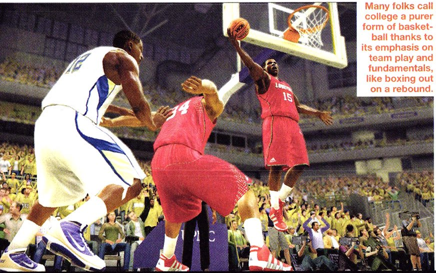
Fast, fun, friendly college hoops

PS3 PRICE: $59.99 ESRB: Everyone PUBLISHER: EA Sports DEVELOPER: EA Sports

PS3 | R

The "amateur" sibling to the pro *NBA Live* big brother definitely feels like a different kind of hoops experience. Aside from introducing some of the on-court tactical refinements from *Live 10* (such as the AI movement and reaction to inside post play), the on-court action is really defined by the coaches calling out their tactics. The coach's attitude, expressed through pop-up windows of barked-out instruction, impacts your players' on-court decisions immeasurably.

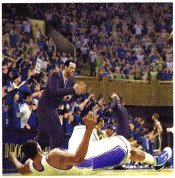
As the onscreen coach's off-screen decision-maker, you can select your team's play style (for example, a particular "motion offense" that might suit the size and make-up of your roster). Plays are then executed based on that theme, supported by slick play mechanics that enable you to press one button to start darting runs with your guard, tell the center to jostle for space in the paint, or signal your outside shooters to get free for a three-pointer. While that could seem like regurgitating canned moves, almost like quick-time events, it actually recreates the dynamic and free-flowing play style that distinguishes the college game.



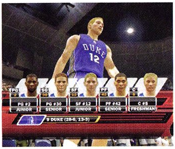
Many folks call college a purer form of basketball thanks to its emphasis on team play and fundamentals, like boxing out on a rebound.

Certainly, the format ably represents the college game's upbeat tempo and teamwork requirements over the pro's glitz and star power. No doubt the lawsuits brought by collegiate stars have contributed to the generic player models and facial sorta-likenesses (of course, players are identified only by position and number, not actual names), contributing to a very average presentation level. Tie-ins with CBS for March Madness tournaments and ESPN for the Maui Invitational (that means a little Dick Vitale, baby!—for better or worse) add a sprinkling of TV-style intros and camera angles.

Tweaks to the little details, such as only showing replays on certain scores, not every one, help give the whole flow a sense of momentum. And really, that's what the college game is about. Get on a run and the momentum indicator ticks in your favor, raising the volume level, and seemingly opening new lanes and increasing your chances of draining three-pointers (and forcing your opponent to call a timeout to calm it down). *NCAA 10* controls fast and fluid on offense, with crisp passing. On defense, we executed a disproportionately high (but welcome) number of steals with the right timing and blocked a surprising number of jump shots.



See that coach on the sideline? He's the most important player in this game. It's all about strategy.



You'll see a broadcast-style presentation, authentic as usual.

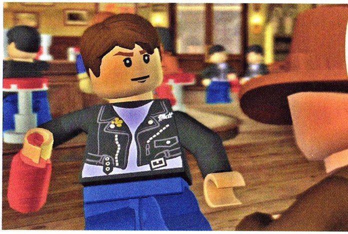
Without the distraction (and egoism) of star power, and an emphasis on teamwork, pace, and movement that strains but doesn't break the AI, *NCAA Basketball 2010* is pick-up-and-play friendly for college game newcomers and hoops aficionados alike. Rob Smith

★★★★

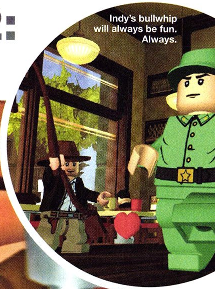
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues

Cute and comical, but prepare to whip this Indy

PS3 PRICE: $49.99 ESRB: Everyone 10+
PUBLISHER: LucasArts DEVELOPER: Traveller's Tales



Ah, Mutt. We hate you so.



Indy's bullwhip will always be fun. Always.

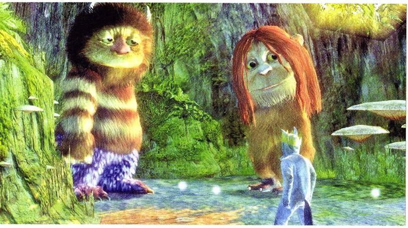
We like the LEGO games a lot, but *LEGO Indiana Jones 2* is the weakest of the recent pack by a wide margin. It comes armed with bucket loads of charm, but there's barely an iota of slick design style to complement that personality. It's like going to a concert where the band is really personable and has great stories between songs, but the actual music sounds like a middle school talent show.

It's not that we expect a LEGO game to be easy, but too many times, *LEGO Indy 2* leaves the player unclear about what to do next. Virtually every puzzle scenario and boss encounter is lacking in guidance. Let's use the first boss as an example: Sure, we know switching between the two playable characters enables you to stand on two buttons to fire a jet engine, and yes we learned we could lasso foes, but where is the suggestion that the two go together in this encounter? It's the classic puzzle mistake: you have to figure out what the designers are thinking, not what your situation contextually tells you. Yes, we sussed it out eventually, but it's just more frustrating to play than it should be.

That said, the content, which spans all four movies (starting with the fourth and weakest) is vast and varied. And although combat largely consists of buttonmashing, and navigating in two-player co-op mode is often confusing, segments from all the series greatest moments will delight fans. Indy's charisma wins out over weak design.

Rob Smith

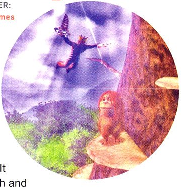
★★★



Where the Wild Things Are

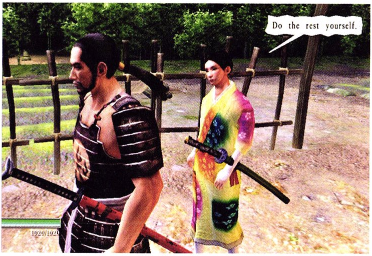
PS3 PRICE: $49.99 ESRB: Everyone 10+ PUBLISHER: Warner Bros. Int. Ent. DEVELOPER: Griptonite Games

Where the Wild Things Are is basically *Prince of Persia* in footie pajamas. Young ruffian Max leaps, pole-swings, sails and glides around, smacking bugs of every kind and asking wild things to punch down a tree or throw him across a crevice. The crisis? Tentacled black ooze seeping from the ground threatens to engulf the island. It looks fine, but Max isn't nimble enough and the simple action wears thin. Plus, *515* collectible items? That's a slog.



Eric Bratcher

★★★



Way of the Samurai 3

PS3 PRICE: $49.99 ESRB: Mature PUBLISHER: Agetec DEVELOPER: Acquire

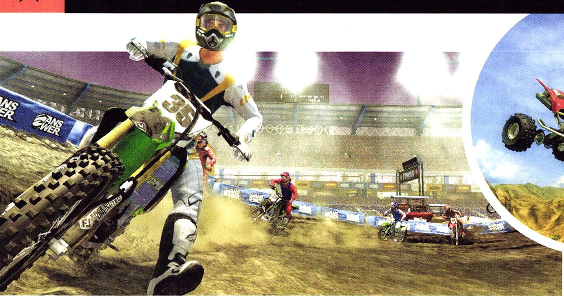
Say you're a warrior dropped into a feudal Japanese province. The samurai oppress the villagers, but those very samurai are hiring. So are the local bandits/rebels. With a handful of days to change everything, what do you do? To help you decide, this open-world adventure offers up a free-roaming world and a clockwork-like plot with several endings.

The graphics, exploration, and swordfights all feel dated, but those with patience and a love of story will find this immensely rewarding.

Tell my family I love them.

Mikel Reparaz

★★★½



MX vs. ATV Reflex

Get ready to eat some dirt

PS3 PRICE: $59.99 ESRB: Everyone PUBLISHER: THQ DEVELOPER: Rainbow Studios

Right off, you'll notice two great things about *MX vs. ATV Reflex*. One is that the game, while not exactly *beautiful,* is far more technically impressive than *Untamed* in terms of its visuals and communicating an overall sense of speed.

Second, you'll love the new controls. The Left-analog stick steers and R2 accelerates, sure, but the *right* stick enables you to shift the weight of your rider. For the 4-wheelers, it's a perfectly adequate system, no big deal. For the bikes though, it's an outright revelation. Leaning into hairpin turns, adjusting your bike's position relative to the ground—much like the *Skate* series—*Reflex's* control system is completely natural yet incredibly deep, and after riding for 10 minutes, we don't want to play motocross games with any other setup.

Still, despite our love of the bike controls, we were less enamored with *Reflex's* unforgiving physics: you'll bail if someone so much as breathes heavily on you. Particularly in stadium races, the bikes are unbelievably packed together causing wrecks at every turn. On the other hand, in outdoor races you can go whole minutes without seeing another vehicle. Additionally, *Reflex's* wildly uneven difficulty curve makes some events a breeze and others a study in broken bones...and controllers.

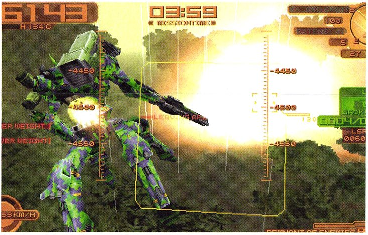
Reflex's control scheme provides a fantastic simulation of what we believe off-road driving is actually like. It's just a shame that for all but the most experienced racers, that frequently translates to "multiple trips to the emergency room."

Joe Newman

★★★½

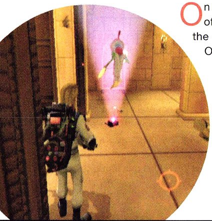
PS3 | R

PSP | R



Ghostbusters

PSP PRICE: $29.99 ESRB: Everyone 10+ PUBLISHER: Atari DEVELOPER: Red Fly Studios



On PS3, *Ghostbusters* was a captivating mix of great graphics, creative gameplay (*love* the slime tether) and Bill Murray wisecracks. On PSP, it's a half-baked port of the already stripped-down PS2 version. Most of the humor is still intact, but the cartoony visuals and sound are glitchy, and using the face buttons to move the camera is a nightmare. Hey, developers—we're not using a DualShock here: How about adjusting the gameplay to accommodate?

Alan Kim

★★½

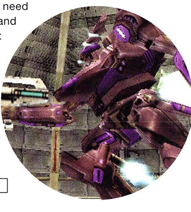
Armored Core 3 Portable

PSP PRICE: $14.99 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: From Software DEVELOPER: From Software

This is one of those reviews we feel the need to open by pointing out the low price and the fact that this straight PS2-to-PSP port is meant to appeal only to that tiny group of people who love customizing combat mechs as much as gearheads enjoy tweaking engines in a high-end racing sim. If that's you, know that the depth is all here—along with the crippled controls, dated graphics, and the same brutal difficulty. For mech-loving masochists only.

Alan Kim

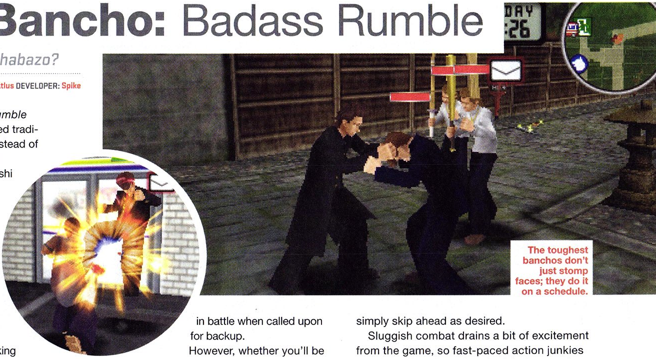
★★



Kenka Bancho: Badass Rumble

Are you a *bancho* or a *shabazo*?

PSP PRICE: $39.99 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: Atlus DEVELOPER: Spike



The toughest banchos don't just stomp faces; they do it on a schedule.

Kenka Bancho: Badass Rumble spotlights the time-honored tradition of school trips, but instead of sightseeing and souvenirs, young bancho (ultimate ass-kicker) Takashi Sakamoto is concerned with one thing: beating the pulp out of all the other banchos in "Kyouto" (which is NOT Kyoto) for their respective class trips.

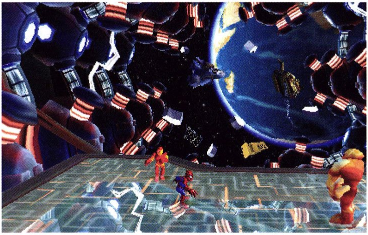
Becoming the top bancho in Japan requires more than sheer badassery, though—you'll have to fight with honor, which means locking eyes with opponents (by holding the right shoulder button) and gaining the upper hand by talking smack with timed button presses. From there, it's all about overpowering your opponent with a customizable set of punches, kicks, and special moves, and conquering Japan's 45-plus banchos really is a matter of kicking ass and taking names. Once you've defeated a bancho, they'll become your peon, serving you in battle when called upon for backup.

However, whether you'll be able to face all the other banchos depends on your clock management skills—you only have a week of in-game time to work with, and you'll lose precious hours traveling around Kyouto or recovering from lost battles. With the open-ended approach, you can do as much or as little as you want in a day, or simply skip ahead as desired.

Sluggish combat drains a bit of excitement from the game, so fast-paced action junkies may look elsewhere, but the hilarious and irreverent dialogue, paired with solid visuals and a unique replayable game structure, make the quirky *Kenka Bancho* a worthwhile experience for PSP owners seeking something truly original.

Andrew Hayward

★★★



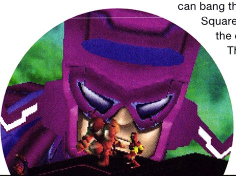
Marvel Super Hero Squad

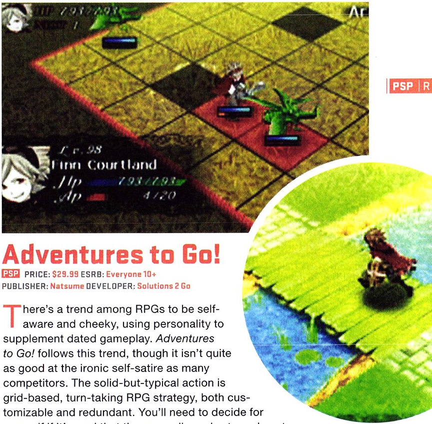
PSP PRICE: $29.99 ESRB: Everyone 10+ PUBLISHER: THQ DEVELOPER: Mass Media

Available on PS2 as well as PSP, this grade-school brawler would be a poor choice even for players who don't think a cutesy, kiddie version of the Hulk is a sheer travesty. It skews really young—you can bang through by just hammering the Square and Triangle buttons, and the only real threat is boredom. The camera and tech specs are sub-par, and this PSP version is single-player only. There are better games out there, even for the youngest sprogs.

Alan Kim

★½





Adventures to Go!

PSP PRICE: $29.99 ESRB: Everyone 10+
PUBLISHER: Natsume DEVELOPER: Solutions 2 Go

There's a trend among RPGs to be self-aware and cheeky, using personality to supplement dated gameplay. *Adventures to Go!* follows this trend, though it isn't quite as good at the ironic self-satire as many competitors. The solid-but-typical action is grid-based, turn-taking RPG strategy, both customizable and redundant. You'll need to decide for yourself if it's cool that the game discards story almost entirely—your character wants money, plain and simple. No princesses, but no crazy plot twists either.

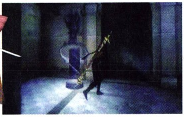
Alan Kim

★★½

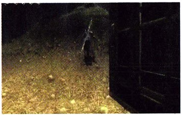
PLAYING HARD TO GET

There's no glory in easy Trophies, but the hard ones? Achieve these über-challenging Trophies to earn instant acclaim and adulation. We show you how.

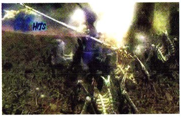
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 TROPHY: Feat of a Hundred Slashes > Achieve a 100-hit combo



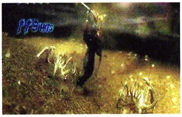
You can use any weapon to achieve this Trophy. The Lunar Staff is particularly effective.



Go to the room full of bones in Chapter 7. The vast amount of weaker enemies makes the task simpler.

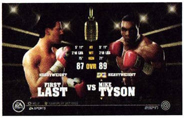


When the enemies attack, keep using the Ultimate Techniques and your combo counter will rocket upwards.

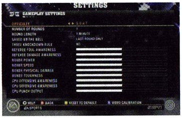


Don't retreat or worry about tactics. Keep at it and you should eventually achieve a 100-hit combo.

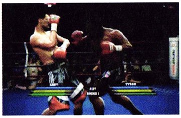
Fight Night Round 4 TROPHY: David and Goliath > Beat CPU Mike Tyson



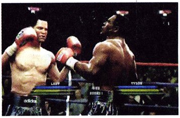
Arrange the match in Fight Now on G.O.A.T. Use a created boxer to unlock the "My Style Is Impetuous" Trophy too.



Set the number of rounds to one, and the round length to just one minute.

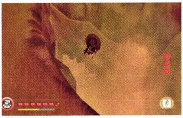


Fight sensibly—block and land decent punches. Don't try to unload on Mike with everything you've got.

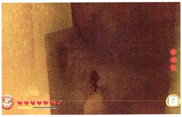


Knock Tyson down with a Haymaker Uppercut. He'll get up, but the round and Trophy will be yours. Congrats.

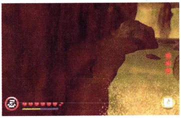
Mini Ninjas TROPHY: Silent Assas... Ninja > Complete a level without being seen



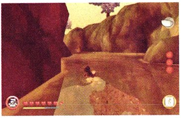
Load the Great Canyon level. Playing as Hiro, jump down to the river at the beginning.



Sail down the river to the waterfall. Scale the cliff face until you reach a cave complex. Run through it.

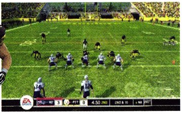


Cross the stone walkway over the waterfall. Drop down onto the ledge on the right and follow it around.

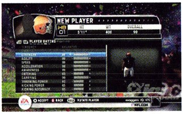


Drop into the water just before the bridge. Follow the river all the way to the end for the ping.

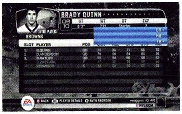
Madden NFL 10 TROPHY: The Gang's All Here > Trigger a seven-player tackle



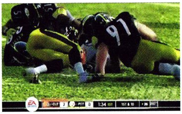
This Trophy must be completed on All-Pro, with no co-operative play and five-minute quarters.



Create a new player. Make him 400 lbs. and a halfback. Set all his running skills to 99.



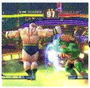
In NFL Rosters, go to Depth Chart and make this player the starting halfback. See where we're going here?

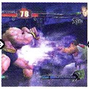


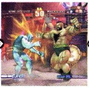
Start a game. When your back has the ball, run him up the middle for a huge gang-tackle and the ping.

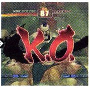
Street Fighter IV

TROPHY: Legendary Champion > Defeat Gouken and clear Arcade in Hardest


Play as Zangief. You'll need to execute one Perfect, three Ultra Combo finishes, and five First Strikes.


It's cheap, but spam the Lariat move. It forces the AI to attack, which you can then counter.

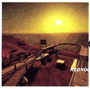

It'll take you about 10 minutes to get through the whole Arcade mode, so it's not too much of a hassle.

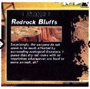


Defeat Seth, and you'll appear in the Deserted Temple stage against Gouken. Win, and the Trophy is yours.

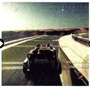
FUEL

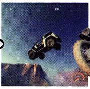
TROPHY: Newton was right, after all! > Perform a massive jump and fall for 150 meters


To earn this Trophy you have to find the highest spot on FUEL's enormous map and throw yourself off it.



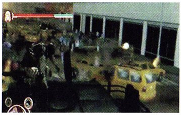
Locate Redrock Bluffs on your map and set a GPS marker. Take a chopper ride over to it if you've been there before.

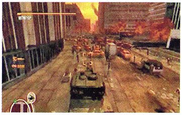

Look for the bridge that leads out onto the glass-floored viewing platform. Keep an eye out for a gap in the fence.

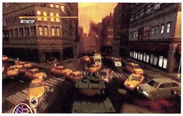

Drive at full speed towards the gap and launch off the edge. The Trophy will ping just before you land.

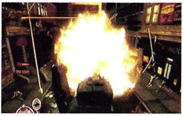
Prototype

TROPHY: Wrecking yard > Destroy 2,000 vehicles


You can wait until the end of the game to achieve this Trophy, or you can get it right away.

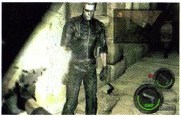

First, acquire a tank. Then head towards somewhere busy like Times Square or the streets around Central Park.

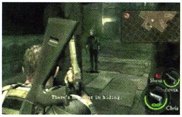

Smash through the traffic while simultaneously firing your cannon. The chaos will cause a mighty gridlock.

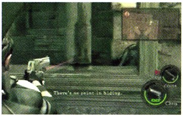

As the cars pile up they become sitting ducks. Keep repeating until you reach 2,000 and the Trophy pings.

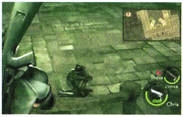
Resident Evil 5

TROPHY: Bad Blood > Give Wesker a beatdown


You have to deal loads of damage on Wesker in your first encounter to get this Trophy. Wait until you go upstairs.

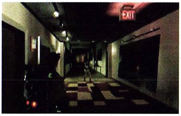

Track Wesker on the radar (he's the blue triangle) and get behind him. Shoot him three or four times.


Use one of the game's Magnums for maximum damage. It'll take about three sequences before he's defeated.

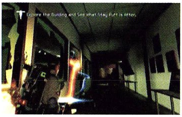

You can also shoot Wesker through the gaps in the walls, but you'll get a nasty quick-time event if you're too close and fail.

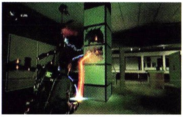
Ghostbusters

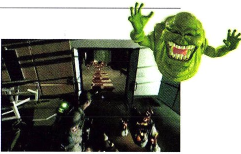
TROPHY: I Love You When You Rough-House! > Do tons of damage



Specifically, you need $10,000 worth of damage in the office before you reach the roof and battle Stay Puft.

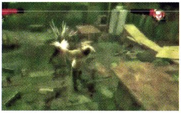

The trick here is destroying everything—even stuff you might not think counts (like windows).

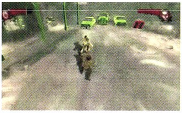

When you get to the main office get rid of the minions and use your proton beam to blast everything.

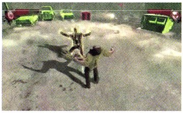

Make sure you reach the $10,000 mark before you leave. Keep blasting until you hear the ping.

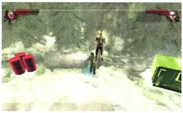
X-Men Origins: Wolverine

TROPHY: Stick Around > Impale Victor Creed


You'll need to toss Victor Creed (aka Sabretooth) onto one of the sharp bits of scenery outside the bar for this Trophy.


Wait until you get thrown into the parking lot. There's a convenient piece of wood sticking out of the building.


You don't have to *kill* Creed this way to earn the Trophy—just stick him securely at some point during the epic battle.

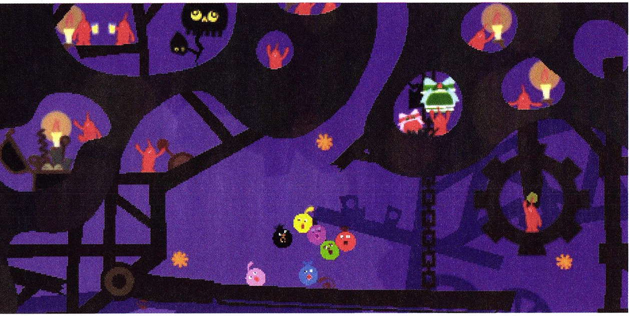

Get next to Sabretooth and press throw, holding the Left-analog stick in the direction of the spike. Aim well.

PlayStation Network Games

Downloadable games and add-ons for less than the cost of carnival-ride tickets

+ **YEA** You'll get full value for your money.

- **NAY** No legs, no fun, no value.



Kawaii! (Cute, in Japanese.) Yes, we admit it, we're Loco for Roco puffs.

LocoRoco Midnight Carnival

PRICE: $14.99 ESRB: Everyone PUBLISHER: SCEA DEVELOPER: SCEA Santa Monica

+ Nobody does cute, quirky puzzle platformers quite like the Japanese and *LocoRoco Midnight Carnival* is no exception to the rule. Like its series' predecessors, the blob-like LocoRoco must once again roll, bounce, and squeeze their way through vibrant, organic levels with the accompaniment of a nonsensical, but irresistibly enthralling soundtrack. The motivation? To thwart the irksome BuiBui and their insidious levels so the LocoRoco can get back to sleeping. Hey, we can relate.

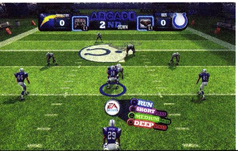
New to the gameplay equation is the super "Boing!" bounce that can be used to chain together higher and higher jumps and to propel you off walls. The levels now reflect a more challenging platforming sensibility that requires precise mastery of the seemingly simple, but devilishly exacting "tap shoulder-buttons to jump and roll" controls to navigate. But time also plays a factor, with your final score affected significantly for moseying and meandering through a level.

With 16 standard and three bonus stages, plus two mini-games, and competitive and co-op ad hoc multiplayer, *Midnight Carnival* doesn't skimp on content. Coupled with its unique, irresistible personality and invitingly low price point, there's no reason this *LocoRoco* shouldn't bounce its way onto every PSP. Roger Burchill

Madden NFL Arcade

PRICE: $14.99 ESRB: Everyone PUBLISHER: EA Sports DEVELOPER: EA Tiburon

+ *Madden NFL Arcade* is to *Madden NFL 10* as *3-on-3 NHL Arcade* was to *NHL 09*: It's an entertaining arcade respite from the rigors of simulation sports games. *Madden Arcade's* particular formula features five-on-five play on a narrower 60-yard field where your team must score within four downs. That's right, there are no first downs. There's also no clock, the first team to 30 points wins.



A complete NFL license means that you have a comprehensive collection of teams, players, and stadiums at your disposal. The graphics are 'tooned-up a bit and the playbook is very basic, but there are 13 "Game Changers" which impart special powers and effects (like freezing opposing players and flip-flopping the score) if you successfully execute a play when they come up.

Madden Arcade's upside is that it's a fun, easy-to-get-into experience for *Madden* veterans and novices alike. Its downside is the price tag that seems about five bucks too high. But then, we don't have EA Sports' licensing bill to pay either. Roger Burchill

PSone more time

Can't miss classics—now available on PSN

PlayStation
ODDWORLD
ABE'S ODDYSEE

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

PRICE: $9.99 ESRB: Teen

As advertised, it's odd. But the skinny, weaponless creature seeking to save his race is strangely endearing.

PlayStation
Um Jammer LAMMY
Leave it to Lammy

Um Jammer Lammy

PRICE: $5.99 ESRB: Everyone

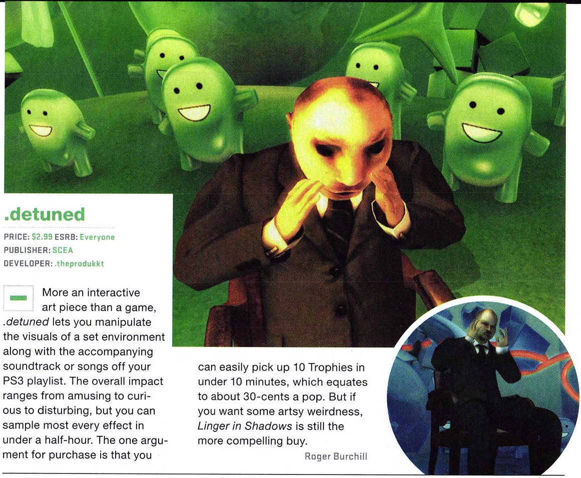
Yes, there were music games before *Guitar Hero.* This follow-up to *PaRappa the Rapper* hits the right notes.

PlayStation
Jumping Flash! 2

Jumping Flash 2

PRICE: $5.99 ESRB: Everyone

Robbit the robot bunny faces off against Captain Kabuki in this surprisingly innovative 3D platformer.



.detuned

PRICE: $2.99 **ESRB:** Everyone
PUBLISHER: SCEA
DEVELOPER: .theprodukkt

− More an interactive art piece than a game, *.detuned* lets you manipulate the visuals of a set environment along with the accompanying soundtrack or songs off your PS3 playlist. The overall impact ranges from amusing to curious to disturbing, but you can sample most every effect in under a half-hour. The one argument for purchase is that you can easily pick up 10 Trophies in under 10 minutes, which equates to about 30-cents a pop. But if you want some artsy weirdness, *Linger in Shadows* is still the more compelling buy.

Roger Burchill

---

topatoi: The Great Tree Story

PRICE: $4.99 **ESRB:** Everyone **PUBLISHER:** BAL Holding Limited **DEVELOPER:** Boolat Games

+ Characters, control, and level design are the three main components of a good platformer. *topatoi* manages to get two out of the three right with its Gyroscopic Exploration Multi-dimensional Multi-terrain Apparatus (GEMMA) vehicle and levels that feature a fine mix of timed-jumping and puzzle-solving elements. GEMMA's name may seem contrived, but its unique handling properties offer a fresh gameplay experience. The one downside is the forgettable characters, but what do you expect for five bucks? Cameos from Sonic and Mario?

Roger Burchill

Digger HD

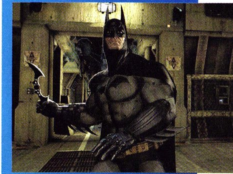
PRICE: $9.99 **ESRB:** Everyone
PUBLISHER: Creat Studios
DEVELOPER: Creat/Windmill Software

− If you're not familiar with the original *Digger,* it's an '80s-era PC game that mixes elements of *Pac-Man* and *Dig Dug* in a less memorable package. This update features enhanced HD graphics and plays as well as the original version (which is also included). But unless you have a certain nostalgic devotion to the original *Digger,* the old-school–style gameplay quickly seems repetitive. It's a solid effort, but seems about five bucks too much for the clearer, crisper ride down memory lane.

Roger Burchill

PLAY ON

Must-have add-ons from the PlayStation Store



Batman: Arkham Asylum Prey In The Darkness Map Pack

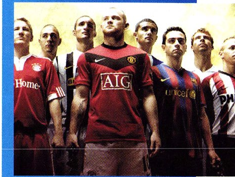
PRICE: Free **ESRB:** Teen

A great game that does add-ons right: frequent and free. You *must* check out these two new challenge maps.

Red Faction: Guerrilla Smasher Pack

PRICE: $4.99 **ESRB:** Mature

Demolish everything with your armored walker in one new Wrecking Crew mode and eight new maps.

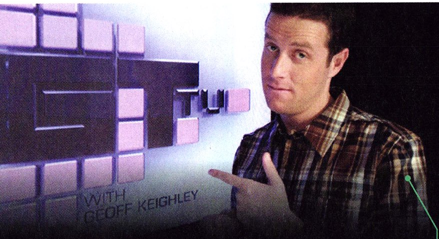


FIFA 10 Live Season 2.0 All Leagues

PRICE: $9.99 **ESRB:** Everyone

Hardcore soccer fans need their weekly updates of players' real-world performance and stats.

PSN Video Delivery Service



And the winner is...

Videogaming's biggest TV night—the *Spike Video Game Awards* show—is coming to PlayStation Network. In anticipation of the show airing December 12th on Spike TV, we talk with the host of *GameTrailers TV* and *Spike VGA's* Executive Producer, **Geoff Keighley.**

PTOM: *Spike Video Game Awards* have grown in popularity and value to publishers and developers over the years. Is that a statement of TV's increasing influence in affecting gamer buying decisions?
Geoff Keighley: That's part of it, but I also think the industry appreciates Spike's investment in the videogame category. No other TV network has invested in the gaming space like Spike. Believe it or not, Spike came up with the idea for the VGAs before the network even had a name. We're now in our seventh year of the VGAs, and four years ago added a weekly series that I host called GameTrailers TV. Spike is in 100 million homes, and the VGAs now air in over 65 countries around the world. So it's definitely a powerful platform, made even more powerful by the amazing announcements and surprises the game publishers share with us. Tune in on Saturday, December 12th at 8 PM to see what's in store this year.

What do you hope that the VGAs will come to represent to gamers and the industry in the years ahead?
The VGAs are the biggest night of the year for the gaming industry. It's a celebration of all the amazing games that have come out in 2009, and also a glimpse at the future of gaming. We've found that as much as gamers want to recognize the best games of the year, they really want a first-look and sneak preview of what's coming. We love surprising our audience with new game announcements and footage.

Who chooses the winners?
The winners are jointly decided by an advisory board of the top game journalists (including the Editor in Chief of *PlayStation: The Official Magazine)* and the public, who vote online at GameTrailers.com.

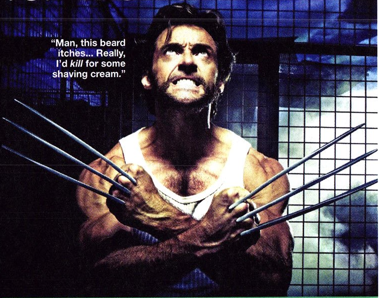
Can you tease what exclusive announcements and video trailers the viewers can expect this year? How do you secure those exclusives?
We are incredibly excited about this year's slate of world premieres. I can't say much, but let me tell you this: We're taking things a step further in 2009 and plan to announce more than a half-dozen new games for the first time on the VGAs. The show is becoming more and more like E3, as publishers begin to tease their big titles for Fall 2010. As for how we book that great content, I spend the better part of six months talking to publishers and developers. It helps that we have a huge worldwide audience and an amazing track record. Last year, the VGAs is where *Uncharted 2* and *God of War III* were both seen for the first time.

The game industry typically rejects the notion of development team stars. How do you feel about devs or celebrities accepting awards?
We definitely aim to strike the right balance between celebrity talent and game developers. Last year, for instance, we had Will Wright on stage for a lifetime achievement award, along with developers such as Todd Howard *(Fallout 3),* Alex Evans *(LittleBigPlanet),* Cliff Bleszinski *(Gears of War 2),* Hideo Kojima *(Metal Gear Solid 4),* and even the guys from Rockstar Games. Games are absolutely created by teams, and I think that's reflected in the speeches by most winners who specifically call out their co-workers. And sometimes multiple members of the team come up to accept awards. For *Fallout 3* and *Gears of War 2,* there were multiple acceptors on stage.

What's your personal Game of the Year so far (including the stuff you've had inside access to and played before the rest of us)?
I'd have to say that *Batman: Arkham Asylum* and *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves* have been my favorites. *Batman* was a sleeper hit that came out of nowhere. The first *Uncharted* was a great game, but the sequel blows everything else out of the water.

How many people are involved in actually putting on this show?
If you add it all up there are hundreds of people involved in the VGAs, from cameramen to producers to lighting technicians. But a team of around 10 to 15 folks from Spike puts on the core show—they work year-round to make sure we deliver the biggest night of the year for gaming. And of course we couldn't do it without the support of the publishers and developers who create amazing world premiere trailers for the show.

TOP VDS DOWNLOADS


"Man, this beard itches... Really, I'd *kill* for some shaving cream."

MOVIES	**TV SHOWS**
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	*Family Guy: Road to Multi-verse*
Observe and Report	*The Cleveland Show*
Ghosts of Girlfriends Past	*Naruto Shippuden*
Adventureland	*Smallville*
The Proposal	*It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*

Own a new computer for just $29.99* per week!

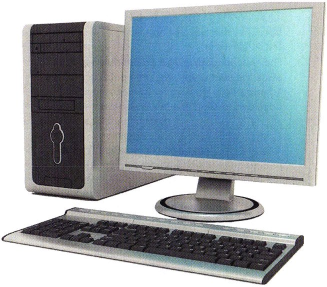
And improve your credit score at the same time!

Bad Credit, No Credit? No Problem!
There's no credit check, so you
won't be turned down.

If you can afford a weekly payment of just $29.99* for just 12 months, then you're already approved for a brand new Dell™ or HP™ Computer, guaranteed.

ACT NOW AND RECEIVE:

In-Car GPS System
Free MP3 Player
Free Printer with select models



Call today to get the computer of your dreams, and improve your credit at the same time.

Give us a call today!

1-877-683-8196

*Prices start at $29.99 but may vary by model.

Letters

Feedback, Insight, Outrage, and Death Polka

PlayStation
The Official Magazine
EXCLUSIVE Multiplayer MAPS!
Level designers' TOP TIPS!
DOMINATE ON DAY ONE
MODERN WARFARE 2
INVERSION
SMACKDOWN VS RAW
BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

▲ **This month's conversation starter**

> "Yes, I know the internet is the future, but right now most of the human race still live with other people!" →

↑MULTIPLAY DOH

I've just finished reading your review for *Demon's Souls*—needless to say I'm buying this one. But sadly, this is another game that reminds me how people who have no online access are ignored. It's a huge downer to read something like "online play is its core feature" in a review. I haven't read whether or not it has offline co-op, but if it doesn't, I'm going to be beyond pissed! Developers can manage technological feats like awesome online co-op, but decide not to give a simple offline option for two players?! Multiple games are already guilty of screwing those who just want to keep playing with people they know and love instead of gambling on "Anonymous." I remember when the focus was on playing a game with friends we have HERE. *Neuronyx, via email*

I am beginning to get very frustrated with game developers these days. They give us a taste of great games with splitscreen co-op for those of us who thrive on that aspect of gaming, and then they just rip it away like it's nothing. I was so looking forward to *Resistance 2* when it was approaching release, but then was devastated to find that they had done away with one of the best splitscreen campaigns ever. Now, *CoD: Modern Warfare 2* appears to be doing the same.

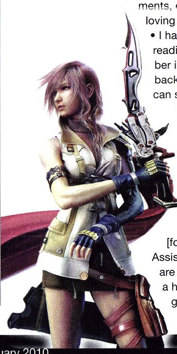
I fully understand the marketing of online co-op and multiplayer, but I have no interest in playing with a bunch of youngsters online. Nothing against them, but it's not my thing. My wife and I love to play games together, and there just aren't enough games out there that deliver the offline multiplayer experience we want. Remember kids, COUPLES THAT PLAY TOGETHER, STAY TOGETHER. Peace out.

Greg Taylor, via email

Once again, PS3 tries to destroy my home. Another soon-to-be-blockbuster, *Uncharted 2* has multiplayer, but online only. What's with the glaring lack of quality two-player offline experiences? Back in the day, my younger sister and I played a LOT of *DDR* since that was the best two-player game out there and we had to "share" the PlayStation. Now, my fiancé and I fight over game time. Yes, I know the internet is the future, but right now most of the human race still live with other people! Think about it, how many parents are encouraged to buy a game because BOTH their kids can play at the same time? Wii, anyone? *Sabrina, via email*

LETTER OF THE MONTH

TLIWWP (THIS LETTER IS WORTHLESS WITHOUT PICTURES)



I have been reading your wonderful magazine since the start of my very emo puberty, almost 10 years ago. Now a foxy 21-year-old honey, I decided to send in a few bullet-pointed comments, questions, and a loving hello.

- I have just finished reading your November issue. (Welcome back, Eric!) All I can say is, "Yay! Poster! OMG. Yay! Another poster!" Please continue to include more in your magazine in the future.
- Teresa Dun [former PTOM Assistant Editor], you are my hero. Being a hardcore female gamer myself, you are a complete inspiration to me... You are cool and sophisticated, yet adorable—and seem to review all the games I find myself infatuated with over the years. You motivate me to strive harder to make it into the game industry myself. *hug*
- Your pink *Final Fantasy* cover [August 09 issue] was the greatest game cover I have probably ever seen. So I became incredibly distraught and depressed after reading the next issue containing mixed, but mostly negative responses towards it—followed by your promise to never have such a cover again. No!!! You've teased me with the most delicious cupcake that I shall never taste again?!
- I severely miss your swimsuit issues.
- Since you have now been "Official" for a while, are you guys ever planning to include the free game demo discs that the old mag did? Is it a price issue? I really, really, loved those!
- Please start including some fan-art back into your pages again. I always loved that too.
- You guys should create some hot merch for us fans to attire ourselves in.

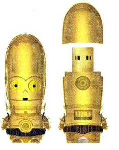
Much love to you all!

Kimberlee Catena, via email

Thanks, Kimberlee. Your letter epitomizes the kind of feedback we like to receive:

- You appreciate our largesse.
- You compliment a staff member (although she did abandon us to go make games).
- You accurately assess our creativity. (Don't worry, we're planning on using Chartreuse on a cover soon—once we figure out what color it really is.)
- You're female and you want a swimsuit issue. Awesome.
- You bring up issues we complain to our bosses about—at which point we discover that we could either have a disc and cool merch, or our salaries.

But most of all, we like the fact that you're a foxy 21-year-old honey who's writing to us. So much so that you're the first person to receive an actual prize for being our Letter of the Month. The rest of you quit grumbling… you'll have another chance next month.



Kimberlee wins a C-3PO 2GB USB Flash Memory Drive courtesy of Mimobot.com.

LESSON LEARNED

I am a proud owner of a 60GB PS3 and over the past couple of years I have accumulated many games and downloaded add-ons, updates, and even purchased videos for my PS3. Recently I noticed that my available hard drive space was at 11GB and therefore I needed to upgrade. Boy, was I excited when I came across the "How to upgrade your PS3 hard drive" article in your October issue. I followed all the instructions posted but encountered a big problem when I tried to re-install the videos I had backed up. I was able to re-install them on my new 500GB hard drive, but when I went to play them I was greeted with a message stating that the copyright for these videos was invalid. When I contacted Sony for an explanation, they stated that any purchased video content had a copyright that was only valid on the hard drive at the moment of purchase, and that if I wanted to view these videos again, I'd have to reinstall my old hard drive or re-purchase the videos for my new drive. Luckily, I only had a few *Robot Chicken* episodes and a couple of movies, but how about those other PS3 owners that have their hard drives full of videos? On Sony's behalf, they do state this in their terms and conditions (somewhere) and they were quick to point out that I had agreed to these terms. My biggest gripe is that nowhere in YOUR article do you guys give any kind of warning. Now I know that there are a lot of PS3 owners that will upgrade their hard drives soon enough, please let other PS3 owners know about this before they scrap their old hard drives. *Raul Bahena, IL*

Apologies for our omission, and thanks to you for this information, but digital rights management is an ever-shifting landscape with few firm answers. Every time we deal with media servers or drive issues, we encounter files that we can't access or that won't play one moment but will inexplicably work in another instance (sometimes). The reality is, we can never provide all the answers for all the technical issues PlayStation owners encounter. Our advice is back up everything prior to fiddling with your hardware, and share your experiences with the PTOM community so we can all learn from real-world experiences.

THE TRUTH REVEALED

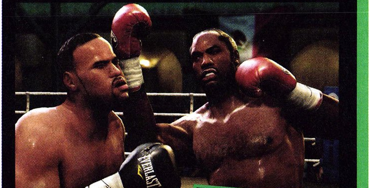
In your Face to Face story, Rob and Roger are boxing about the length of games. A couple friends at my work saw the picture of the two boxers with Rob and Rog's faces on them. They are big sports buffs, and I am a game buff, so they asked whose bodies were used in that photo. I said it was from *Fight Night Round 4* so it's definitely Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson. They then went into their spiel about knowing everything about sports and said that there was no way the two boxers I named were in that picture.

They say its either Evander Holyfield and someone else, or George Foreman and someone else. So can you guys print a picture of the actual screen shot without your faces so we can settle this?

Daniel Brumley, via email

Sorry, Daniel, both you and your friends are wromg. Turn in your Man cards at the door please.

Eddie Chambers vs. Lennox Lewis



Roger Burchill vs. Rob Smith

LET'S GET READY TO RUMBLE

For the November issue Face to Face story...I totally agree with Roger! ROGER WINS!!! If there is less content the price should come down. I personally love a long game that I can really get into—that's why RPGs exist. I don't think that every game should be long, but I certainly don't think that every game should be 10 hours or less just because the amount of entertainment you get from it is equal to that of a movie (per hour anyway). I'll bet that if Rob went to his favorite fast food joint and he received only half a burger and half of his fries for the same price as a full meal, he'd be livid. (Yes, I said livid.) It's the same with games: Don't make short changing gamers an industry standard.

Antoine, via email

I think a game that only gives you six to 10 hours of gaming is a waste. I would only rent such a game. *Rick Cole, LA*

My money's with Rob, 100-percent, though depending on your core audience I may be in the minority. Frankly, as an old-school gamer, I find Roger's comments rather shortsighted. We thirty-something gamers, and there are a lot of us, shed a nostalgic tear toward some of our favorite childhood experiences with our chosen game systems. Between 1985 and 1993, I must have played somewhere in the order of one thousand games; and many through to completion. Is this unique? Absolutely not; all the kids were doing this.

In the last eight years, I have probably only played one-tenth this amount at best, and most of these experiences were very cursory. What an unfortunate paradox of adulthood—you now have the ability to pay for the pastime you love, but there are far too many other obligations that eat away your leisure time.

Brian Novosel, via email

I agree to some extent with both Roger and Rob. The way I see it, the argument on game length is flawed. Anyone who's been playing videogames for more than a decade (in my case two) knows that game length has no norm. I play games for the story and only play them once, regardless of replay value or multiple endings. I keep only a choice group of franchises with the expectation I will finish them or replay them again. The bigger concern shouldn't be game length by time, but by quality of the experience. Maybe six hours of *Fallout 3* is plenty to some and perhaps that same amount of time on *Heavenly Sword* is too long. Ultimately the consumer will decide what's and isn't worth their time.

Jesse Holt, via email

Rob and Roger's bout over game length went the distance with Roger earning the split decision with 40-percent of the votes versus 30-percent for Rob. The other 30-percent declared it a draw. Roger FTW!

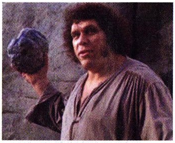
SUCKER FOR A PRETTY FACE

Your one-sentence Blu-ray "review" of *Dollhouse: Season One* [Nov. 09 issue] was the single most infuriating thing I have ever read in PTOM! I ask you one question... Have you actually watched the show? It's really good! So with all the crap reality TV these days, why do you diss a good show? Maybe you guys should stick to what you're good at and just review games.

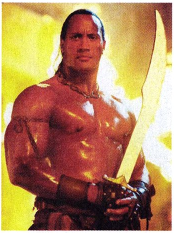
Ryan, via email

Cinema Giants

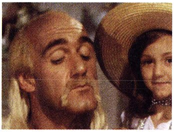
Our December issue Reviews Intro page contest winner is Zhenlong Li from New York. All three images depicted famous wrestlers starring in movies and reflected the quality of their performances.



The first photo displays Fezzik (played by WWF wrestler Andre the Giant) from *The Princess Bride.* The movie is legendary for its humorous take on classic fairytale-type stories and Andre the Giant did a superb job portraying Fezzik in the film.



The second in this series is retired pro-wrestler Dwayne Johnson (aka The Rock) in *The Scorpion King.* While the Rock's portrayal was passable, the film was mediocre at best and didn't live up to the expectations of a *Mummy*-series spin-off.



The last image is the wrestler Hulk Hogan in *Mr. Nanny.* His character, Sean Armstrong, must babysit two mischievous kids in order to get access to some computer chip. The strength of this film should have been its comedic elements at which the Hulk failed miserably.

We went straight to our Blu-ray guru, Jason D'Aprile, with your comments. After rolling his eyes, he replied, "I realize some people worship at the church of Whedon, but as big a fan of *Firefly* as I am, *Dollhouse* is a real low note in his career. If you're into flat, uninteresting plots, misogynistic characterizations and themes, and just generally dull writing, *Dollhouse* is for you. However, since it did somehow make it to a second season, I can only assume that people are into watching hot women do anything on TV...even this."

HERO TO ZERO

I've been wondering about something that has me (and I'm sure many gamers) perplexed. I see it time and time again. I find that whatever game I am reading about in a magazine preview sounds like a worthy play. Then lo and behold, the game comes out and it gets a crappy review. I find it very hard to believe that you don't know that a game is crap when you're previewing it.

Frank, via email

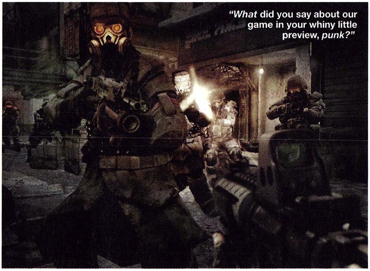
To be honest, we often *do* know pretty early on whether a game is shaping up to be a winner. But previews aren't, and shouldn't be, reviews for two reasons: 1) How would you like it if something you're creating was declared crap before it was even completed? And 2) There's always an exception to the rule. *Killzone 2* is an example of a game that had a rough development ride, but in the end, it turned out awesome. So read our previews to learn what's cool (or potentially cool) about a game, but read our reviews to learn what isn't.

FORWARD THIS TO ALL YOUR FRIENDS

I am getting messages from friends on PSN that Sony has confirmed that they will begin charging for online play on 01/12/09. Now I caught the 2009, but in every rumor there is a shred of truth. Is there any kind of indication that this may happen now or in the near future? I stopped buying Xbox Live and went all PS3 cause of the free online play. Any kind of reassurance you can give me will be greatly appreciated.

Eddie, via email

* sigh * It's absolutely not true. And that ousted Nigerian dictator isn't going to send you 38 million dollars either.



"*What* did you say about our game in your whiny little preview, *punk?*"

THE DARK SIDE

When playing games that offer you choices on whether you want to become a hero or a villain (i.e. *Infamous),* which path do you take? Do you replay the game going the other route after you finish the game?

George Malfavon, CA

Well, we always start out trying to be good, but always fail miserably—just like in real-life.

BATTLE TO THE DEATH

In the December issue, a reader named Javier voiced his disgust of hip-hop in videogames, but he advocated for more death metal. While he bashed rap for focusing on money, girls, and cars, he wants to hear music that advocates skinning your grandmother and wearing her as a coat or proclaiming Satan as your lord and master. I think I'll take money, cars, and girls over Satan and skinning granny any day of the week.

Tical2399, via email

That's why we prefer Polka. All the fun, zero negativity.

IN THE SLOW LANE

What is with all of the games coming out so fast? Every time I get a game for my PS3 a new one comes out before I can finish the old one. Then I play the new one and forget all about the old game. I still have many games that I have left unplayed for months to a year. I still haven't finished *Assassin's Creed, Resistance 2, Burnout Paradise,* and I haven't even started *Fallout 3* and *GRID.* I know they are all good games but I just can't keep up.

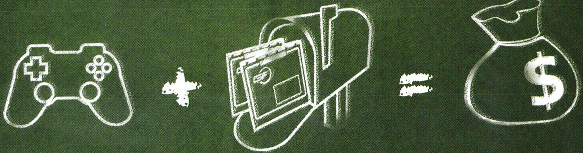
John Looney, via email

And you call yourself a gamer… Pathetic. Time to give up the non-essentials in your life, John: food, sleep, and women. You've gotta lot of catchin' up to do.

contact Send your thoughts and comments to PTOM_Letters@futureus.com. It's the only way we'll stem the mindless cycle of violence.

We welcome reader photos, letters, and stories ("Submissions"), however, we cannot promise to publish any Submission and none will be returned. Neither *PlayStation: The Official Magazine* ("PTOM") nor Future US, Inc. shall be liable for loss or damage to any Submission. By sending in your Submissions to PTOM you represent and warrant that you own or otherwise have all necessary rights to the Submissions to allow us to publish them in PTOM and as follows. You grant PTOM a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and fully sub-licensable license to use, copy, distribute, publish, modify, adapt, translate, and store, your Submissions, in any form, format, or medium, of any kind now known or later developed and to use your name, likeness, and any other information in connection with the use of the Submission you provide.

GAMEFLY SAVES YOU CASH



I will never buy a bad game again I will never buy a bad game again

GAMEFLY.COM®

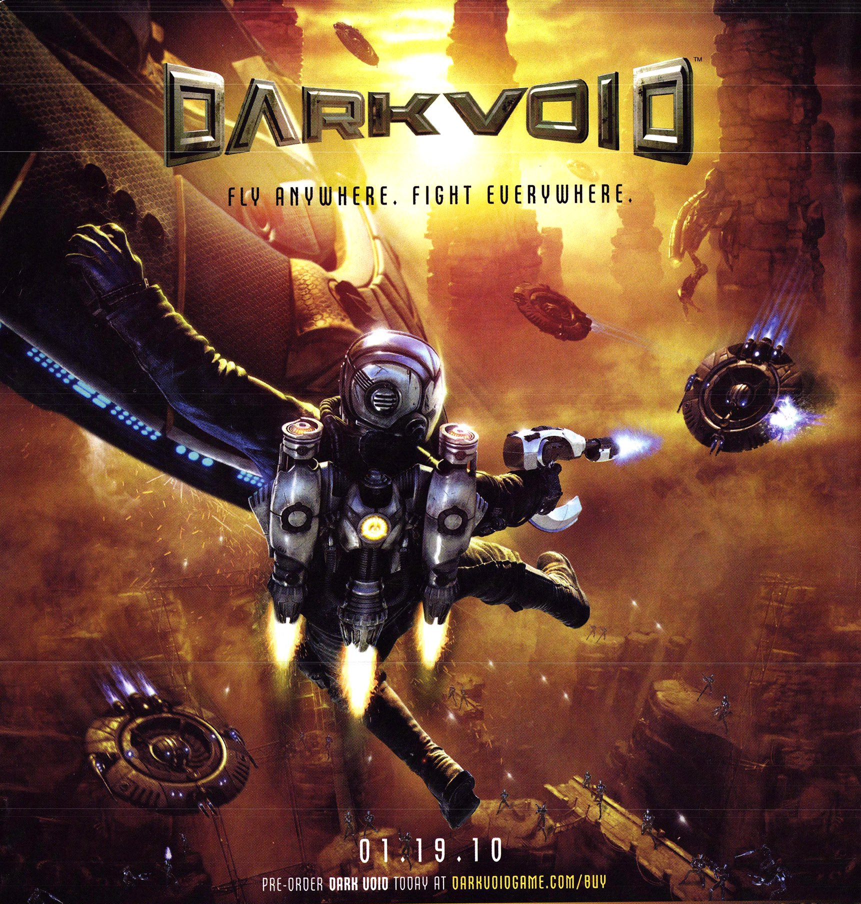
Video Game Rentals

Over 7,000 titles • No late fees • Free shipping

THE SABOTEUR
CALL OF DUTY MODERN WARFARE 2
UNCHARTED 2 AMONG THIEVES
PLAYSTATION 3

Download GameFly GameCenter for FREE on your iPhone™ and iPod Touch®

©2010 GameFly, Inc. GAMEFLY and the GF Logo are trademarks of GameFly, Inc. All other marks used under license by their respective owners. Unless you cancel your account, your credit card will be charged for the price of your game plan at the end of your free trial. You must be 18 years of age or older and reside inside the 50 United States to use the GameFly service.

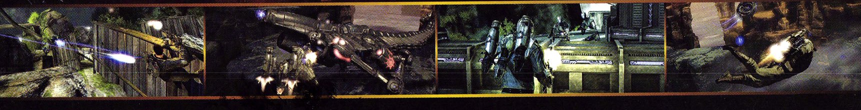


DARKVOID™

FLY ANYWHERE. FIGHT EVERYWHERE.

01.19.10

PRE-ORDER **DARK VOID** TODAY AT DARKVOIDGAME.COM/BUY



TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Animated Blood
Mild Language
Violence

PS3 PlayStation Network XBOX 360. XBOX LIVE Games for Windows LIVE CAPCOM®

©CAPCOM ENTERTAINMENT, INC. 2010 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks and "PS3" is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Windows, the Windows Vista Start button, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies, and "Games for Windows" and the Windows Vista Start button logo are used under license from Microsoft. The ESRB rating icons are registered trademarks of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks are owned by their respective owners.

ADVERTISEMENT

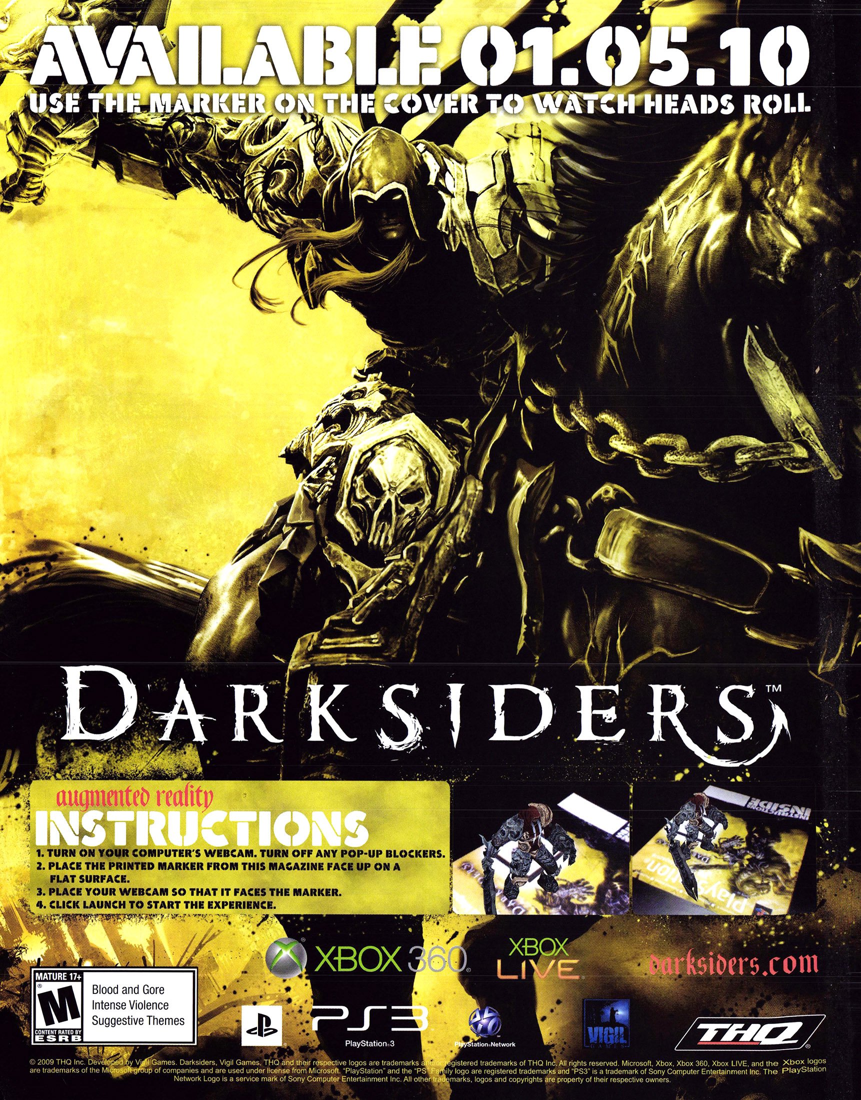
PlayStation

The Official Magazine

JANUARY 2010

DARKSIDERS
your last days begin now

INSTRUCTIONS INSIDE



AVAILABLE 01.05.10

USE THE MARKER ON THE COVER TO WATCH HEADS ROLL

DARKSIDERS™

augmented reality

INSTRUCTIONS

1. TURN ON YOUR COMPUTER'S WEBCAM. TURN OFF ANY POP-UP BLOCKERS.
2. PLACE THE PRINTED MARKER FROM THIS MAGAZINE FACE UP ON A FLAT SURFACE.
3. PLACE YOUR WEBCAM SO THAT IT FACES THE MARKER.
4. CLICK LAUNCH TO START THE EXPERIENCE.

XBOX 360. XBOX LIVE.

darksiders.com

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Suggestive Themes

PlayStation 3

PlayStation Network

VIGIL GAMES

THQ®

© 2009 THQ Inc. Developed by Vigil Games. Darksiders, Vigil Games, THQ and their respective logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of THQ Inc. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies and are used under license from Microsoft. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks and "PS3" is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The PlayStation Network Logo is a service mark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All other trademarks, logos and copyrights are property of their respective owners.

Made with love by

RetroMags

Our goal is to preserve classic video game magazines so that they are not lost permanently.

People interested in helping out in any capacity, please visit us at retromags.com.

No profit is made from these scans, nor do we offer anything available from the publishers themselves.

If you come across anyone selling releases from this site, please do not support them and do let us know.

Thank you!